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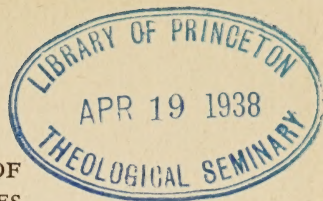
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THE SHREWSBURY EDITION OF THE WORKS OF  
SAMUEL BUTLER, EDITED BY HENRY FESTING JONES  
AND A. T. BARTHOLOMEW. IN TWENTY VOLUMES.  
VOLUME NINE: EX VOTO



“Il n’y a que deux ennemis de la religion—le trop peu, et le trop; et des deux le trop est mille fois le plus dangereux.”—L’ABBÉ MABILLON, 1698.







IL VECCHIETTO

# EX VOTO

*by*

SAMUEL BUTLER



LONDON: JONATHAN CAPE

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AI VARALLESI E VALSESIANI  
L'AUTORE  
RICONOSCENTE



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**E**X VOTO : AN ACCOUNT OF THE SACRO Monte or New Jerusalem at Varallo-Sesia. With some notice of Tabachetti's remaining work at the Sanctuary of Crea was published in May 1888. In the summer of that year Butler went to Dinant and Namur and succeeded in identifying Tabachetti (Tabaguet) with Jean de Wespign of Dinant. In *The Universal Review* for November 1888 he published "A Sculptor and a Shrine,"<sup>1</sup> in which he gives all the information he had collected since the publication of *Ex Voto* relating to Tabachetti, and also a description of the Sanctuary at Montrigone and of the figures there. At the end of November he printed the gist of his *Universal Review* article as a leaflet of four pages. This leaflet was bound up in subsequent copies of *Ex Voto* accompanied by a note that it would be supplied to all who applied for it. *Ex Voto* had been kept standing in type and Butler now incorporated into the text all the new material which he had collected and caused two copies of the book thus revised to be printed. They are dated 1889, and the new material extends the book from 277 pages to 306 pages. Moulds were then taken and the type distributed. Of these two revised copies he kept one for himself; the other he sent to Mr. John Murray, because he thought that it would be useful to the editor of Murray's *Northern Italy* when he was revising the account of Varallo contained in that work. This copy has since been lost sight of. In his own copy Butler continued to make corrections and additions as

<sup>1</sup> The first part of this article, which deals with Tabachetti, has never been reprinted, Butler having incorporated all the information given therein into his revised copy of *Ex Voto* referred to later on in this Introduction. The second part, which deals with Montrigone, is reprinted in *The Humour of Homer*, and, in the Shrewsbury Edition, in his *Collected Essays*.

## *Ex Voto*

fresh facts came to light. He carried on an elaborate correspondence with Cavaliere Francesco Negri, Signor Giulio Arienta, and others friends in Italy who were interested in the Sacro Monte and in Tabachetti, and re-wrote many passages as the result.

A translation of *Ex Voto* into Italian was projected and eventually published at Novara in 1894. It is the work of Signor Angelo Rizzetti and contains a new Preface by Butler of which an English version is prefixed to the present volume. In this Preface Butler makes it clear that he was fully aware that much remained to be done before his work could be regarded as anything but tentative and incomplete. Both before and since his death facts have come to light and books and articles have been written which overthrow some of his most cherished theories. In particular may be mentioned Cav. Francesco Negri's *Il Santuario di Crea* (Alessandria, 1902), and Signor Pietro Galloni's two books, *Sacro Monte di Varallo. Atti di Fondazione* (Varallo, 1909); and *Sacro Monte di Varallo. Origine e Svolgimento* (Varallo, 1914). Copies of these books are in the Samuel Butler Collection at St. John's College, Cambridge.

The editors believe that English admirers of Butler will wish to have *Ex Voto* in the form in which he left it, and they have therefore printed the present text from his own extended and corrected copy of the revised edition. If any enthusiast for the Sacro Monte should be encouraged thereby to take up the work where Butler left it, nothing that could happen would have pleased him more.

A word must be said as to the illustrations, which do not exactly agree with those in the original edition. In his own revised copy of the work Butler made a list of the illustrations which he intended should accompany

## *Introduction to the Shrewsbury Edition*

a new edition. The subjects mentioned agree for the most part with those illustrated in the Italian version of *Ex Voto*. The editors have, therefore, adopted this list for the illustrations in the Shrewsbury Edition, and fresh collotype plates have been made for the occasion.

The editors offer their best thanks to Mr. O. K. Struckmeyer, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, for translating into English Butler's Preface to the Italian version of the book, and for a similar service in respect of the contemporary description of Tibaldi's Plan of the Sacro Monte. This plan and the description accompanying it appear in this edition for the first time in England.

1924.

H.F.J.  
A.T.B.



**T**O WRITE A PREFACE IS, AS IT WERE, TO make a will; it gives one the feeling of being on one's literary death-bed. This is the time at which the ghost of a man's past writings rises up before him and threatens him with its forbidding aspect. In this supreme moment the poor dying man will or will not be terrified, according to the opinion he has of his own importance. A writer who is modest will naturally think: "This book has not succeeded as it should have done, and I have not profited as I could have wished by the splendid opportunity that has come my way. That is evident, but my fate is a common one and we are all guilty in the same deplorable fashion; I can at least comfort myself, then, that I am on a level with other people. Is it impossible that I may be better? I am content not to be worse." If, on the other hand, the writer has a good opinion of himself he will think that the whole world must have its eyes fixed on his work and that even the mistakes in it may be the source of innumerable pages of comment.

I do not desire to specify to which of the two categories I belong. I know that in this literary agony my mind remembers many sins for which I could wish to obtain absolution from the public; but in any case I am convinced that my book will be submitted to the judgment of a public which is as wise as it is benevolent. And this is fortunate because, to tell the truth, in my own eyes it continually grows more and more immature.

Each day new facts are brought home to me suggesting, in many cases, quite serious alterations in what I have written. My very worthy colleagues of Casale, the cleric Don Minina, and the avvocato Cavaliere Francesco Negri, have discovered new and interesting things about the family and the works of Giovanni

## *Ex Voto*

Tabachetti—or De Wespín—with the result that this essay of mine threatens to become decrepit even before it has seen the light of day.

In the course of my labours I have had to include all the valuable material that these excellent gentlemen have placed at my disposal, and in this way my work, instead of appearing as a compact and uniform whole, promises to become a mere piecing together of evidence set forth haphazard. A book should be like an organism, conceived rapidly and executed without pause, according to some pre-arranged plan which does not admit of too many subsequent modifications. Four years in a manuscript state, with continual additions arising from ever fresh discoveries, can bring about a change in any book, as far as “unity of conception” goes.

In Belgium, again, I have had two accomplished collaborators, Monsieur Remacle, Secrétaire Communal de Dinant, and Monsieur Lahaye, Archiviste à Namur, and to them I owe the discovery of the true family name of Giovanni Tabachetti and his brothers.

Even as I write, M. Lahaye is putting into effect his undertaking to look into certain facts which will, in all probability, lead to the discovery of the year in which the great plastic artist died; and at the same time I learn from Cav. Francesco Negri that new documents have been discovered by him in the Municipal Archives at Casale, proving that there was at Crea, about the year 1600, a certain Nicola Tabachetti “sive de Vespínii,” brother of Giovanni, and that he also is described as a sculptor.

This discovery raises some rather difficult questions about several works at Crea hitherto attributed to Giovanni himself. We cannot convince ourselves that any other hand but that of Giovanni Tabachetti (and of Father Latino in the restorations) has been at work



## *Translation of Preface to Italian Version*

in the chapel of S. Eusebius, and there are other figures at Crea (as for instance that of the Founders and of the two Angels in the chapel of the Immaculate Conception) which are undoubtedly the work of Giovanni; but now that we know that Nicola worked together with his brother, we are forced to suspect that one or two figures of minor interest, which I had till now rather too boldly attributed to Giovanni, are by Nicola instead. No doubt, however, can be entertained as to the extent of his work at Varallo.

The most hazardous statement in my book is the one expressing the view that the portrait of Giovanni Tabachetti in the Ecce Homo chapel and the "Vecchietto" represent the same person. Considering the difference in height between the two figures this seems unlikely, in spite of the marked similarity, in my opinion, of the two heads; but, as long as no certain evidence is forthcoming about the date of Giovanni Tabachetti's death, there will always be some uncertainty on this point.

Another supposition that also seems to me rather daring is that Tabachetti made two or three figures at Montrigone; and that, indeed, is hardly likely. Presumably, at any rate, the head of a dead Christ, referred to on page 149,<sup>1</sup> may be regarded as his work.

There is continual mention in this book of my obligations to Signor Giulio Arienta. If we were not always of the same opinion, as is more especially the case in the matter of the chapels of the Temptation and of the Pietà, where each of us holds strongly to his own view, I can confidently assert that in the majority of cases we have always worked together in concord, and the disputes that have arisen between us have always been of the kind characterized by the poet Hesiod as "beneficial to men."

<sup>1</sup> [Shrewsbury Edition, p. 98.]

## *Ex Voto*

Finally, I should like to express my most cordial thanks to Cavaliere Angelo Rizzetti, of Valsesia, for the great care he has shown and for the enthusiasm which he has expended upon the successful translation of this book; and this I am happy to do just when I am on the point of being introduced to Italy—the nation whose good-will I value above that of any other. I know not whether this book will contribute towards winning for me that recognition which everywhere under Italy's blue sky from the Sanctuary of Varallo to Mount Eryx in Sicily I seek to find. I do know that I have done all in my power, and the decision must be left to the reader.

London, 26th April 1894.

SAMUEL BUTLER

P.S.—At the last moment Cav. Francesco Negri, for ever indefatigable in the pursuit of his researches no less than eager and pressing in the communication of them to me, writes to me that he has discovered the approximate date of Giovanni Tabachetti's death in the Registers of Costigliole, where the great sculptor had fixed his residence in company with his family. He says:

“Amongst other deeds I found this one: ‘Joannes filius *quondam* Joannis Tabacheti et Annae Mariae conjugis, ortus die quarta mensis Januarii, hora quarta noctis, baptizatus fuit, etc., etc., die sexto anni 1616.’

“Thus, although the day and the month have still to be determined, it is certain that Tabachetti joined the great majority in 1615. Since his death is not notified in the Registers, although the death of Anna Maria, of his mother, of his father, and of a son of Tabachetti's on 11th July 1617, without any mention of the name however, are notified, we must suppose that our Giovanni died elsewhere, and perhaps at Varallo,

## *Translation of Preface to Italian Version*

where he was working, or even at Crea. But I am unable to verify this as the Registers of the Parish of Serralunga, in whose jurisdiction the Sanctuary lies, were burnt some years ago, and those of the Parish of Solobue, where Tabachetti also lived, do not begin until 1660."

It is certain then that the "Vecchietto" cannot be a portrait of Tabachetti himself, and it seems that he executed no works of any kind at Montrigone; the head of the dead Christ, however, referred to on page 149,<sup>1</sup> does not belong to the rest of the body, and seems to have been brought from elsewhere. Whether I am right in this, or whether I am only making another mistake, is a question which I leave to the judgment of other students.

London, *3rd June* 1894.

SAMUEL BUTLER

<sup>1</sup> [Shrewsbury Edition, p. 98.]



THE ILLUSTRATIONS TO THIS BOOK ARE mainly collotype photographs by Messrs. Maclure, Macdonald & Co., of Glasgow. Notwithstanding all their care, it cannot be pretended that the result is equal to what would have been obtained from photogravure; I found, however, that to give anything like an adequate number of photogravures would have made the book so expensive that I was reluctantly compelled to abandon the idea.

As these sheets leave my hands, my attention is called to a pleasant article by Miss Alice Greene about Varallo, that appeared in *The Queen* for Saturday, 21st April 1888. The article is very nicely illustrated, and gives a good idea of the place. Of the Sacro Monte Miss Greene says: "On the Sacro Monte the tableaux are produced in perpetuity, only the figures are not living, they are terra-cotta statues painted and moulded in so life-like a way that you feel that, were a man of flesh and blood to get mixed up with the crowd behind the grating, you would have hard work to distinguish him from the figures that have never had life."

I should wish to modify in some respects the conclusion arrived at on pp. 148, 149,<sup>1</sup> about Michel Angelo Rossetti's having been the principal sculptor of the Massacre of the Innocents chapel. There can be no doubt that Rossetti did the figure which he has signed, and several others in the chapel. One of those which are probably by him (the soldier with outstretched arm to the left of the composition) appears in the view of the chapel that I have given to face page 144,<sup>2</sup> but on consideration I incline against the supposition of my text, *i.e.*, that the signature should be taken as governing the whole work, or at any rate the greater part of it,

<sup>1</sup> [See Shrewsbury Edition, p. 132.]

<sup>2</sup> [Shrewsbury Edition, to face p. 132.]

## *Ex Voto*

and lean towards accepting the external authority, which, *quantum valeat*, is all in favour of Paracca. I have changed my mind through an increasing inability to resist the opinion of those who hold that the figures fall into two main groups, one by the man who did the signed figure, *i.e.*, Michel Angelo Rossetti; and another, comprising all the most vigorous, interesting, and best placed figures, that certainly appears to be by a much more powerful hand. Probably, then, Rossetti finished Paracca's work and signed one figure as he did, without any idea of claiming the whole, and believing that Paracca's predominant share was too well known to make mistake about the authorship of the work possible. I have therefore in the title to the illustration given the work to Paracca, but it must be admitted that the question is one of great difficulty, and I can only hope that some other work of Paracca's may be found which will tend to settle it. I will thankfully receive information about any other such work.

15<sup>th</sup> May 1888.



English Miles

10 5 0 10 20



Mont Blanc

Monte Rosa

Fobello

Alagna Riva

Val Sesia

Aosta

R. Dora Baltea

Gressoney

Issime

Oropa

Andora

Graglia

Biella

Ivrea

Santhia

FRANCE

Groscavallo

Ceres

S. Ignazio

Lanzo

Fucine Viù

Stura di Viù

Colma di S. Giovanni

R. Stura

From Rocca Melone

Susa

Bussoleno

Borgone

S. Giorio

Villar Fochiaro

M. Pirchiriano S. Michele

S. Ambrogio

R. Dora Riparia

Avigliana

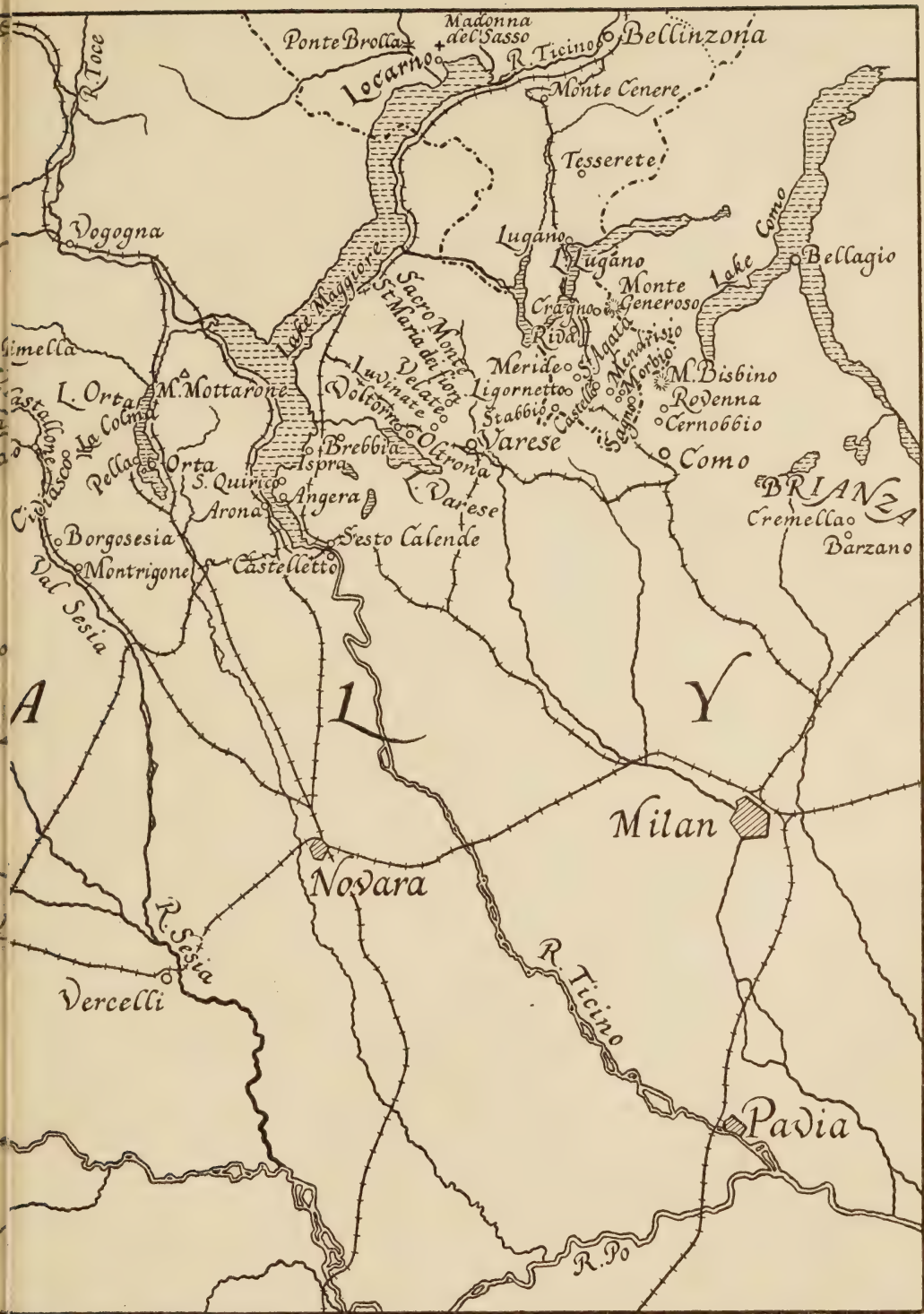
To Pinerolo & Torre Pellice

Superga

Turin

From Me Genevres







## Ex Voto

### CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

**I**N THE PREFACE TO *ALPS AND SANCTUARIES* I apologized for passing over Varallo-Sesia, the most important of North Italian sanctuaries, on the ground that it required a book to itself. This book I will now endeavour to supply, though well aware that I can only imperfectly and unworthily do so. To treat the subject in the detail it merits would be a task beyond my opportunities; for, in spite of every endeavour, I have not been able to see several works and documents, without which it is useless to try and unravel the earlier history of the sanctuary. The book by Caccia, for example, published by Sessali at Novara in 1565, and reprinted at Brescia in 1576, is sure to turn up some day, but I have failed to find it at Varallo, Novara, Milan, the Louvre, the British Museum, and the Bodleian Library. Through the kindness of Sac. Ant. Ceriani, I was able to learn that the Biblioteca Ambrosiana possessed what there can be little doubt is a later edition of this book, dated 1587, but really published at the end of 1586, and another dated 1591, to which Signor Galloni in his *Uomini e fatti celebri di Valle-Sesia* (p. 110) has called attention as the first work ever printed at Varallo. But the last eight of the twenty-one years between 1565 and 1586 were eventful, and much could be at once seen by a comparison of the 1565, 1576, and 1586 [1587] editions, about which speculation is a waste of time while the earlier works are wanting. I have been able to gather two or three interesting facts by a comparison of the 1586 and 1591 editions, and do not doubt that some of the most difficult of the remaining problems in connection with the various chapels would be settled beyond power of question if the missing books were available.

## Ex Voto

I have lately, however, succeeded, through the kindness of Signor Giulio Arienta, in seeing a document to which I vainly sought access while preparing my English edition—I mean the plan of the Sacro Monte made by Pellegrino Tibaldi with a view to his proposed alterations. Neither the plan nor the notes that accompany it<sup>1</sup> are dated, but there is little doubt that they belong to the year 1570, or some year close about that date. Over and above the foregoing there is the inventory drawn up by order of Giambattista Albertino in 1614, and a number of other documents, to which reference will be found in the pages of Bordiga, Galloni, Tonetti, and of the many others who have written upon the Val Sesia and its history. A twelve months' stay in the Val Sesia would not suffice to do justice to all the interesting and important questions which arise wholesale as soon as the chapels on the Sacro Monte are examined with any care. I shall confine myself, therefore, to a consideration of the most remarkable features of the Sacro Monte as it exists at present, and to doing what I can to stimulate further study on the part of others.

I cannot understand how a field so interesting, and containing treasures in so many respects unrivalled, can have remained almost wholly untilled by the numerous English lovers of art who yearly flock to Italy; but the fact is one on which I may perhaps be congratulated, inasmuch as more shortcomings and errors of judgment may be forgiven in my own book, in virtue of its being the first to bring Varallo with any prominence before English readers. That little is known about the Sacro Monte, even by the latest and best reputed authorities on art, may be seen by turning to Sir Henry Layard's recent edition of Kugler's *Handbook of Painting*,—a work which our leading journals of culture have received

<sup>1</sup> [See Introduction, p. xv, and pp. 47-54.]

## *Introduction*

with acclamation. Sir Henry Layard has evidently either never been at Varallo, or has so completely forgotten what he saw there that his visit no longer counts. He thinks, for example, that the chapels, or, as he also calls them, "stations" (which in itself should show that he has not seen them), are on the way up to the Sacro Monte, whereas all that need be considered are on the top. He thinks that the statues generally in these supposed chapels "on the ascent of the Sacro Monte" are attributed to Gaudenzio Ferrari, whereas it is only in two or three out of some five-and-forty that any statues are believed to be by Gaudenzio. He thinks the famous sculptor Tabachetti—for famous he is in North Italy, where he is known—was a painter, and speaks of him as "a local imitator" of Gaudenzio, who "decorated" other chapels, and "whose works only show how rapidly Gaudenzio's influence declined and his school deteriorated." As a matter of fact, Tabachetti was a Fleming and his name was De Wespin; but this is a detail. Sir Henry Layard thinks that Miel was also "a local imitator" of Gaudenzio. It is not likely that this painter ever worked on the Sacro Monte at all; but if he did, Sir Henry Layard should surely know that he came from Antwerp. Sir Henry Layard does not appear to know that there are any figures in the Crucifixion chapel of Gaudenzio, or indeed in any of the chapels for which Gaudenzio painted frescoes, and falls into a trap which seems almost laid on purpose for those who would write about Varallo without having been there, in supposing that Gaudenzio painted a Pietà on the Sacro Monte. Having thus displayed the ripeness of his knowledge as regards facts, he says that though the chapels "on the ascent of the Sacro Monte" are "objects of wonder and admiration to the innumerable pilgrims who frequent this sacred spot," yet "the

## Ex Voto

bad taste of the colour and clothing make them highly repugnant to a cultivated eye."

I begin to understand now how we came to buy the Blenheim Raffaelle.

Finally, Sir Henry Layard says it is "very doubtful" whether any of the statues were modelled or executed by Gaudenzio Ferrari at all. It is a pity he has not thought it necessary to give a single reason or authority in support of a statement so surprising.

Some of these blunders appear in the edition of 1874 edited by Lady Eastlake. In that edition the writer evidently knows nothing of any figures in the Crucifixion chapel, and Sir Henry Layard was unable to supply the omission. The writer in the 1874 edition says that "Gaudenzio is seen as a modeller of painted terra-cotta in the stations ascending to the chapel [*sic*] on the Sacro Monte." It is from this source that Sir Henry Layard got his idea that the chapels are on the way up to the Sacro Monte, and that they are distinct from those for which Gaudenzio painted frescoes on the top of the mountain. Having perhaps seen photographs of the Sacro Monte at Varese, where the chapels climb the hill along with the road, or having perhaps actually seen the Madonna del Sasso at Locarno, where small oratories with frescoes of the Stations of the Cross are placed on the ascent, he thought those at Varallo might as well remain on the ascent also, and that it would be safe to call them "stations." It is the writer in the 1874 edition who first gave him or her self airs about a cultivated eye; but he or she had the grace to put in a saving clause to the effect that the designs in some instances were "full of grace." True, Sir Henry Layard has never seen the designs; nevertheless his eye is too highly cultivated to put up with this clause; so it has disappeared, to make room, I suppose, for the

## Introduction

sentence in which so much accurate knowledge is displayed in respect to Tabachetti and Miel d'Anvers. Sir Henry Layard should keep to the good old plan of saying that the picture would have been better if the artist had taken more pains, and praising the works of Pietro Perugino. Personally, I confess I am sorry he has never seen the Sacro Monte. If he has trod on so many ploughshares without having seen Varallo, what might he not have achieved in the plenitude of a taste which has been cultivated in every respect save that of not pretending to know more than one does know, if he had actually been there, and seen some one or two of the statues themselves?

I have only sampled Sir Henry Layard's work in respect of two other painters, but have found no less reason to differ from him there than here. I refer to his remarks about Giovanni and Gentile Bellini. I must reserve the counter-statement of my own opinion for another work, in which I shall hope to deal with the real and supposed portraits of those two great men.<sup>1</sup> I will, however, take the present opportunity of protesting against a sentence which caught my eye in passing, and which I believe to be as fundamentally unsound as any I ever saw written, even by a professional art critic or by a director of a national collection. Sir Henry Layard, in his chapter on Leonardo da Vinci, says:

“One thing prominently taught us by the works of Leonardo and Raffaele, of Michael Angelo and Titian, is distinctly this—that purity of morals, freedom of institutions, and sincerity of faith have nothing to do with excellence in art.”

I should prefer to say, that if the works of the four

<sup>1</sup> Butler's paper in the *Athenaeum* on this subject is reprinted in his *Collected Essays* in the Shrewsbury Edition. — A.T.B.

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artists above mentioned show one thing more clearly than another, it is that neither power over line, nor knowledge of form, nor fine sense of colour, nor facility of invention, nor any of the marvellous gifts which three out of the four undoubtedly possessed, will make any man's work live permanently in our affections unless it is rooted in sincerity of faith and in love towards God and man. More briefly, it is ἀγάπη, or the spirit, and not γνῶσις, or the letter, which is the soul of all true art. This, it should go without saying, applies to music, literature, and to whatever can be done at all. If it has been done "to the Lord"—that is to say, with sincerity and freedom from affectation—whether with conscious effusion, as by Gaudenzio, or with perhaps robus̄ter unconsciousness, as by Tabacchetti, a halo will gather round it that will illumine it though it pass through the valley of the shadow of death itself. If it has been done in self-seeking, as, *exceptis excipiendis*, by Leonardo, Titian, Michael Angelo, and Raffaele, it will in due course lose hold and power in proportion to the insincerity with which it was tainted.



LEAVING SIR HENRY LAYARD, LET US turn to one of the few English writers who have given some attention to Varallo—I mean to the Rev. S. W. King's delightful work, *The Italian Valleys of the Pennine Alps*. This author says:

“When we first visited Varallo, it was comparatively little known to travellers, but we now found that of late years many more had frequented it, and its beautiful scenery and great attractions were becoming more generally and deservedly appreciated. Independently of its own picturesque situation, and its advantages as head-quarters for exploring the neighbouring Vals and their romantic scenery, the works which it possesses of the ancient and famous Val Sesian school of painters and modellers are most interesting. At the head of them stands first and foremost Gaudenzio Ferrari, whose original and masterly productions ought to be far more widely known and studied than they as yet are; and some of the finest of them are to be found in the churches and Sacro Monte of Varallo” (p. 498).

Of the Sacro Monte the same writer says:

“No situation could have been more happily chosen for the purpose intended than the little mountain rising on the north of Varallo to a height of about 270 feet”—[this is an error; the floor of the church on the Sacro Monte is just 500 feet above the bridge over the Mastalone]—“on which the chapels, oratories, and convents of that extraordinary creation the New Jerusalem are grouped together. Besides the beauty of the site and its convenient proximity to a town like Varallo of some 3000 inhabitants, the character of the mountain is exactly adapted for the effective disposition of the various ‘stations’ of which it consists”—[it does not consist of “stations”]—“and on this account chiefly

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it was selected by the founder, the 'Blessed Bernardino Caimo.' A Milanese of noble family, and Vicar of the Convent of the Minorites in Milan, and also in connection with that of Varallo, he was specially commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV to visit the Sepulchre and other holy places in Palestine, and while there took the opportunity of making copies and drawings, with the intention of erecting a facsimile of them in his native country. On his return to Italy in 1491, after examining all the likely sites within reasonable distance of Milan, he found the conical hills of the Val Sesia the best adapted for his design, and fixed upon Varallo as the spot; being probably specially attracted to it from the fact of the convent and church of Sta. Maria delle Grazie, already described, having been conveyed through him to the 'Minori Osservanti,' as appears from a brief of Innocent VIII, dated December 21, 1486."

Mr. King does not give the source from which he derived his knowledge of the existence of this act, and I have not come across a notice of it elsewhere, except a brief one in Signor Galloni's work (p. 71), and a reference to it in the conveyance of 14th April 1493. But Signor Arienta of Varallo, whose industry in collecting materials for a history of the Sacro Monte cannot be surpassed, showed me a transcript from an old plan of the church of S. Maria delle Grazie, in which the inscription on Bernardino Caimi's grave was given—an inscription which (so at least I understood Signor Arienta to say) is now covered by an altar which had been erected on the site of the grave. The inscription ran:

"Hic quiescunt ossa B. Bernardini Caimis Mediolan. S. Montis Varalli Fundatoris An. 1486. Pontif. Dipl. sub die 21 Xbris. Mortuus est autem in hoc cœnobio An. Vulg. Æræ 1499."

## *The Rev. S. W. King*

It would thus appear that the Sacro Monte was founded four years earlier than the received date. The formal deed of conveyance of the site on the mountain from the town to Bernardino Caimi was not signed till 14th April 1493; but the work had been already commenced, as is shown by the inscription still remaining over the reproduction of the Holy Sepulchre, which is dated 17th October 1491. Probably the work was contemplated in 1486, and interrupted by B. Caimi's return to Jerusalem in 1487, not to be actively resumed till 1490.

"The first stone," says Mr. King, "was laid by Scarognini, a Milanese 'magnifico,' who cordially entered into the scheme; and at his expense the Holy Sepulchre was completed, and a hospice attached, where the founder and a number of Franciscan brothers came to reside in 1493. Caimo had planned a vast extension of this commencement, but died within three years, leaving his designs to be carried out by his successors."

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"Each oratory contains a group—in some very numerous—of figures modelled in terra-cotta the size of life or larger; many of them of great merit as works of art, others very inferior and mere rubbish. The figures are coloured and occasionally draped with appropriate clothing, the resemblance to life being heightened by the addition of human hair"—[which, by the way, is always horse-hair]—"and the effect is often very startling. Each chapel represents a different 'mystery,' and, beside the modelled figures, the walls are decorated with frescoes. The front of each is open to the air, all but a wire grating, through apertures in which the subject may be perfectly seen in the position intended by the designer" (pp. 510-512).

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Mr. King is probably correct in saying that Gaudenzio's earliest remaining frescoes on the Sacro Monte (if they are indeed by his hand and not copies) are those in what is now the chapel of the Pietà. They do not, however, illustrate the present subject of the chapel, but an earlier scene during which Christ was being taken to Mount Calvary. I will deal with the history of this chapel more fully presently; it is enough here to say that the present terra-cotta figures representing a Pietà, and the fresco background, have nothing to do with one another.

“The frescoes on the wall are particularly interesting, as having been painted by him at the early age of nineteen”—[Mr. King supposes Gaudenzio Ferrari to have been born in 1484]—“when his ambition to share in the glory and renown of the great work was gratified by this chapel being intrusted to him; a proof of his early talent and the just appreciation of it. The frescoes are much injured, but of the chief one there is enough to show its excellence. On one side is St. John, with clasped hands gazing upwards in grief, and the two Marys sorrowing, as a soldier in the centre seems to forbid their following further; his helmet is embossed and gilt as in the instances in the Franciscan church, while the two thieves are led bound by a figure on horseback.”

These frescoes appear to me to have been not so much restored as repainted—that is to say, where they are not almost entirely gone. The green colour that now prevails in the shadows and half-tones is alien to Gaudenzio, and cannot be accepted as his. I should say, however, that my friend Signor Arienta of Varallo differs from me on this point. At any rate, the work is now little more than a ruin, and the terra-cotta Pietà is among the less satisfactory groups on the Sacro Monte. Mr. King continues:

## *The Rev. S. W. King*

“In the chapel of the Adoration of the Magi we have a work of higher merit, giving evidence of his studies under Raphael.”

Here Mr. King is in some measure mistaken. The frescoes in the Magi chapel are indeed greatly finer than those in the present Pietà, but they were painted from thirty to forty years later, when Gaudenzio was in his prime, and it is to years of intervening incessant effort and practice, not to any study under Raphael, that the enlargement of style and greater freedom of design is due. Gaudenzio never studied under Raphael; he may have painted for him, and perhaps did so—no one knows whether he did or did not—but in every branch of his art he was incomparably Raphael’s superior, and must have known it perfectly well.

Returning to Mr. King, with whom, in the main, I am in cordial sympathy, we read:

“The group of ten figures in terra-cotta represents the three kings just arrived with their immediate attendants, and alighting at the door of an inner recess, where a light burns over the manger of Bethlehem, and in which is a simple but exquisite group of St. Joseph, the Virgin, and Child. On the walls of the chapel are painted in fresco a crowd of followers, the varieties of whose costumes, attitudes, and figures are most cleverly portrayed. In modelling the horses which form part of the central group, Ferrari was assisted by his pupil Fermo Stella.”—[Fermo Stella is not known to have been a pupil of Gaudenzio’s, and was probably established as a painter before Gaudenzio began to work at all.]—“But the greatest of all Gaudenzio’s achievements is the large chapel of the Crucifixion, a work of the most extraordinary character and masterly execution. His first design for the subject, on the screen of the Minorite Church, he has here carried out in lifelike figures in

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terra-cotta, twenty-six of which form the centre group, embodying the events of the Passion; while round the walls are depicted with wonderful power a crowd of spectators, numbering some 150, most of whom are gazing at the central figure of the Saviour on the cross. The variety of expression, costume, and character is almost infinite. Round the roof are twenty angels in the most varied and graceful attitudes, deserving of special attention; and also a hideous figure of Lucifer."

Gaudenzio's devils are never quite satisfactory. His angels are divine, and no one can make them cry as he does. When my friend Mr. H. Festing Jones met a lovely child crying in the streets of Varallo last summer, he said it was crying like one of Gaudenzio's angels; and so it was. Gaudenzio was at home with everything human, and even superhuman, if beautiful; if it was only a case of dealing with ugly, wicked, and disagreeable people, he knew all about this, and could paint them if the occasion required it; but when it came to a downright unmitigated devil, he was powerless. Who, however, ever yet painted a satisfactory devil, a satisfactory angel, a satisfactory figure of Christ, or indeed a satisfactory anything that transcends ordinary human experience?

To conclude my extracts from Mr. King. Speaking of the Crucifixion chapel, he says:

"Though this combination of terra-cotta and fresco may not be as highly esteemed in the present day as in the times when this extraordinary sanctuary sprang into existence, yet this composition must always be admired as one of the greatest of Ferrari's works, and undoubtedly that on which he lavished the full force of his genius and the collected studies and experience of his previous artist life."

It is noteworthy, but not perhaps surprising, that

## Lanzi

this observant, intelligent, and sympathetic writer, probably through inability to at once understand and enter into the conventions rendered necessary by the conditions under which works so unfamiliar to him must be both executed and looked at, has failed to notice the existence of Tabachetti, never mentioning his name nor referring to one of his works—not even to the Madonna and Child in the church of S. Gaudenzio, which one would have thought could hardly fail to strike him.

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Mr. King has elsewhere in his work referred both to Lanzi and to Lomazzo in support of his very high opinion of Gaudenzio Ferrari; it may, therefore, be as well to give extracts from each of these writers. Lanzi says:

“If we examine into further particulars of his style, we shall find Ferrari’s warm and lively colouring so superior to that of the Milanese artists of his day, that we shall have no difficulty in recognizing it in the churches where he painted; the eye of the spectator is directly attracted towards it; his carnations are natural and varied according to his subjects; his draperies display much fancy and originality, with middle tints blended so skilfully as to equal the most beautiful produced by any other artist. And, if we may say so, he succeeded in representing the minds even better than the forms of his subjects. He particularly studied this branch of the art, and we seldom observe more marked attitudes or more expressive. . . . As Lomazzo, however, has dwelt so much at length on his admirable skill both in painting and modelling, it would be idle to insist on it further. But I ought to add that it is a great reflection upon Vasari that he did not better know

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or better estimate such an artist; so that foreigners who form their opinions only from history are left unacquainted with his merit, and have uniformly neglected to do him justice in their writings.”

Lomazzo says:

“Now amongst the worthy painters who excelled herein, Raph. Urbine was not the least who performed his workes with a divine kind of maiesty; neither was Polidore”—[Polidoro Caldara da Caravaggio]—“much behind him in his kinde, whose pictures seemed as it were passing furious; nor yet Andreas Mantegna, whose vaine showed a very laborious curiositie; nor yet Leonard Vincent”—[Leonardo da Vinci]—“in whose doings there was never any error found in this point. Whereof amongst all other of his works, that admirable last supper of Christ in Refect. S. Maria de Gratia in Milane maketh most evident prooffe, in which he hath so lively expressed the passions of the Apostles mindes in their countenances and the rest of their bodies, that a man may boldly say the truth was nothing superior to his representation, and neede not be afraide to reckon it among the best works of oyle-painting (of which kind of painting John de Bruges was the first inventor). For in those Apostles you might distinctly perceive admiration, feare, grieffe, suspition, love, etc.; all which were sometimes to be seen together in one of them, and finally in Judas a treason-plotting countenance, as it were the very true counterfeit of a traitor. So that therein he has left a sufficient argument of his rare perfection, in the true understanding of the passions of the mind exemplified outwardly in the bodie. Which because it is the most necessary part of painting, I purpose (as I say) to handle in this present booke. I may not omit Mi. Angelo in any case, whose skill and painfulness in this point was so greate, that his pictures



## Lomazzo

carry with them more hard motions expressed after an unusual manner, but all of them tending to a certaine bould stoutnesse. And as for Titian, he hath worthely purchased the name of a great painter in this matter, as his pictures do sufficiently witness; in each whereof there shineth a certain mooving vertue, seeming to incite the beholder unto the imitation thereof. Of whom this saying may well be verified, that he was beloved of the world and envied of nature.

“Finally, mine old Master Gaudentius (though he be not much knowne) was inferior unto fewe, in giving the apt motions to the Saintes and Angels; who was not onely a very witty painter (as I have elsewhere showed), but also a most profound philosopher and mathematician. Amongst all whose all-praiseworthy workes (which are almost infinite, especially in this point of motion) there are divers mysteries of Christe’s passion, of his doing, but chiefly a crucifix called Mount Calvary at the Sepulchre of Varallo; where he hath made admirable horses and strange angels, not only in painting, but also in plasticke, of a kinde of earth wrought most curiously with his own hand cleane rounde”—[*di tutto rilievo*]-“through all the figures.

“Besides in the vault of the Chappell of S. Mary de Gratia in Milane he hath wrought most naturall angels, I meane especially for their actions; there is also that mighty cube of St. Mary de Serono”—[the Cupola of S. Maria at Saronno]-“full of thrones of angells set out with actions and habites of all sortes, carrying diversity of most strange instruments in their hands. I may not conceal that goodly chapel which he made in his latter time, in the Church of Peace in Milan, where you shall find small histories of our Lady and Joachime showing such superexcellant motions that they seem much to revive and animate the spectators.

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“ Moreover, the story of S. Roccho done by him in Vercelli, with divers workes in that city; although indeede almost all Lombardy be adorned with his most rare workes, I will not conceal one saying, which was that all painters delight to steale other men’s inventions, but that he himself was in no great danger of being detected of theft hereafter. Now this great painter, although in reason he might for his discretion, wisdom, and worth be compared with the above named in the first booke, cap. 29, yet notwithstanding is he omitted by George Vasary in his lives of the famous painters, carvers, and architects. An argument, to say no worse of him, that he intended to eternize only his own Tuscanes. But I proceede to the unfolding of the originall causes of these motions ” (Haydocke’s translation of Lomazzo, Book ii, pp. 7, 8).

What Gaudenzio said was that all painters were fond of stealing, but that they were pretty sure to be found out sooner or later, and he did not say anything about running no risk of being caught thieving himself.

For my own part, I should like to say that I prefer Giovanni Bellini to Gaudenzio; but unless Giotto and Giorgione, I really do not know who else of the Italian painters should stand before him. Bernardino Luini runs him close, but great as Bernardino Luini was, Gaudenzio, in spite of not a little mannerism, was greater.

The passage above referred to by Lomazzo as from his twenty-ninth chapter runs:

“ Now if any man be desirous to learne the most exact and smallest parts of these proportions, together with the way how to transfer them from one body to another, I refer him to the works of Le. Vincent, Bramante, Vincentius Foppa, Barnard Zenale; and for prints to Albert Durer, Hispill Peum, etc. And out of

## Lomazzo

mine owne workes he may gather that I have endeavoured if not performed these proportions, done according to these rules; which all the best and famous painters of our time have likewise observed; who have also attained to the exquisite proportions of the seven planets. Amongst whom Mi. Angelo hath merited the chiefeſt commendation; next him Raph. Urbine was famous for making of delicate and Venereall bodies; Leon. Vincent for expressing of solary bodies; Polidore Caldara of Caravaggio for Martiall bodies; Titianus Vecellino for Lunaryes; and Gaudentius Ferrato da Valdugia a Milaner for Jovialistes ” (*id.*, Bk. i, p. 117).

Having been compelled to look through the greater part of Lomazzo’s work, inasmuch as not one of the several writers who have referred to his high opinion of Gaudenzio has given chapter and page, I would fain allow myself to linger somewhat in the fascinating paths into which my subject has led me. I should like to call further attention to this forgotten work as “Englished” by one Richard Haydocke, “Student in Physik,” and dedicated to no less a person than “to the Right Worshipful Thomas Bodley, Esq.,” whose foundation of the library that bears his name is referred to in the preface. Gladly would I tell about Alexander the Great, who, being overmatched by his enemies in India, “was seen to reake forth from his bodie fier and light”; and of the father of Theodoricus who, “by the like vehement effect, breathed out of his heart, as from a burning furnace, fierce sparkels; which flying forth, shone, and made a sound in the aire.” I should like to explain about the motions of the seven planets which are the seven governours of the world, and how Saturn “causeth a complexion of colour between blacke and yeallowe, meager, distorted, of an harde skinne, eminent vaines, an hairie bodie, small eies, eie

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brows joyned together, etc.," and how "he maketh a man subtle, wittie, a way-layer, and murtherer"; how, again, Jupiter is "magnipotent, good natured, fortunate, sweete, pleasant, the best wel-willer, honest, neate, of a good gate, honorable, the author of mirth and judgement, wise, true, the revealer of truth, the chiefe judge, exceeding all the planets in goodnesse, the bestower of riches and wisdome"; how Mars "broaches bould spirites, bloud, brawles and all disordered, inconsiderate, and headdy actions"; how "his gestures are terrible, cruell, fierce, angry, proude, hasty and violent," and how also "he is reputed hoat and drie in the highest degree, bearing sway over redde choler." I should like to tell about the passions, actions, and the gestures they occasion, described as they are with a sweet and silly unreasonableness that is very charming to read, and makes no demand whatever upon the understanding. But charming as are the pages of Lomazzo, those of Torrotti are more charming still, and they have a connection with our subject which Lomazzo's have not. Enough, therefore, that Mr. Haydocke did not get through more than half Lomazzo's treatise, and that, glancing over the untranslated pages, I see frequent allusions to Gaudenzio in the warmest terms, but no passage so important as the longer of the two quoted above.

NOW THAT VARALLO CAN BE EASILY reached by the new railway from Novara, it is not likely to remain so little known much longer. The town is agreeable to stay in; it contains three excellent inns. I name them in geographical order. They are the Italia, the Croce Bianca, and the Posta, while there is another not less excellent on the Sacro Monte itself. I have stayed at all these inns, and have received so much kindness in each of them, that I must decline the invidious task of recommending any one of them especially. My book is intended for Varallo, and not for this or that hotel. The neighbourhood affords numberless excursions, all of them full of interest and beauty; the town itself, though no exception to the rule that the eastern cities of North Italy are more beautiful than the western, is still full of admirable subjects for those who are fond of sketching. The people are hospitable to a fault; personally, I owe them the greatest honour that has ever been conferred upon me—an honour far greater than any I have ever received among those who know me better, and are probably better judges of my deserts. The climate is healthy, the nights being cool even in the height of summer, and the days almost invariably sunny and free from fog in winter. With all these advantages, therefore, it is not easy to understand the neglect that has befallen it, except on the ground that until lately it has been singularly difficult of access.

Two hundred years ago it must have been much as it is at present. Turning to the work of the excellent Canon Torrotti, published in 1686, I find he writes as follows:

“Oh, what fannings is there not here,” he exclaims, “of the assiduous Zephyrs; what warmth in winter, what gelidness of the air in summer; and what freaks

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are there not of Nature by way of caves, grottoes, and delicious chambers hewn by her own hand. Here can be enjoyed wines of the very finest flavour, trout as dainty as can be caught in any waters, game of the most singular excellence; in short, there is here a great commodity of everything most sensual and pleasing to the palate. And of those who come here, above all I must praise the Piedmontese, who arrive in frequent cavalcades of from twenty to five-and-twenty people, to an edification which is beyond all praise; and they are munificent in the gifts they leave behind them to the Holy Place—not resembling those who are mean towards God though they will spend freely enough upon their hotel-bill. Carriages of all sorts can be had here easily; it is the Milanese who for the most part make use of these carriages and equipages, for they are pompous and splendid in their carryings on. From elsewhere processions arrive daily, even from Switzerland, and there are sometimes as many as ten thousand visitors extraordinary come here in a single day, yet is there no hindrance but they find comfortable lodging, and at very reasonable prices.

“As for the distance, it is about sixty miles, or two easy days’ journey from Milan; it is much the same from Turin; it is one day from Novara, and one from Vercelli; but the most delightful thing about this journey is that you can combine so many other devotions along with it. In the Milanese district, for example, there is the mountain of Varese, and that of S. Carlo of Arona on the Lago Maggiore; and there are S. Francesco and S. Giulio on the Lago d’Orta; then there is the Madonna of Oropa in the mountains of Biella, which sanctuary is in the diocese of Vercelli, as is also S. Giovanni di Campiglio, the Madonna di Creva-core, and Gattinara; there is also the Mount Calvary

## *Varallo, Past and Present*

of Domo d'Ossola, on the road towards Switzerland, and Montrigone below Borgosesia. These, indeed, are but chapels in imitation of our own Holy Sepulchre, and cannot compare with it neither in opulence nor in importance; still those of Varese and Oropa are of some note and wealth. Moreover, the neighbourhood of this our own Jerusalem is the exact counterpart of that which is in the Holy Land, having the Mastallone on the one side for the brook Kedron, and the Sesia for the Jordan, and the lake of Orta for that of Caesarea; while for the Levites there are the fathers of St. Bernard of Mentone in the Graian and Pennine Alps of Aosta, where there are so many Roman antiquities that they may be contemplated not only as monuments of empire, but as also of the vanity of all human greatness" (pp. 19-21).

A little later the Canon tells us of the antiquity of the councils that have been held in the neighbourhood, and of one especially "which was held secretly by five bishops on the summit of one of the mountains of Sorba in the Val Rassa, which is still hence called the bishops' seat; for they came thither as to the place where the five dioceses adjoined, and each one sat on a stone within the boundary of his own diocese; and they are those of Novara, Vercelli, Ivrea, Orta, and Sion. Nor must we forget the signal service rendered to the universal church in these same mountains of Rassa by the discomfiture of the heretic monks Gazzari to which end Pope Clement v in 1307 issued several Bulls, and among them one bearing date on the third day of the ides of August, given at Pottieri, in which he confirmed the liberty of our people, and acknowledged the Capi as Counts of the Church. . . . For the Valsesian people have been ever free, and by God's grace have shaken off the yoke of usurpers while continuing faithful and

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profitable subjects of those who have equitably protected them.”

Torrotti goes on to tell us about the Blessed shepherdess Panesia, a virgin of the most exquisite beauty, and only fifteen years old, who was martyred on 1st May 1383 on the mountain of S. Giovanni of Quarona, with three wounds on her head and two on her throat, inflicted by a wicked stepmother who had a devil, and whose behests she had obeyed with such consummate sweetness that she had attained perfection; on which, so invariably do extremes meet, she had to be put to death and made a martyr; and if we want to know more about her, we can find it in the work that has been so elegantly written about her by the most illustrious Father Castiglione Sommasco. Again, there was the famous miracle in 1333 of S. Maiolo in Val Rassa, which is celebrated every year, and in virtue of which Pietro, only child of Viscount Emiliano, one of the three brothers who fought against the heretics, was saved after having been carried off by a ravenous wolf into the woods of Val Sorba as far as the fountain named after the rout which this same Count, when he afterwards grew up, inflicted upon the enemies of the valley in 1377; wherefore he is seen in an old picture of those times as a child in swaddling-clothes in the mouth of a wolf, and he gave the name of Fassola di S. Maiolo to his descendants. Nor, as in private duty bound, can the worthy Canon forget “my own beloved chapel of St. Mary of the Snow, for whose honour and glory I have done my utmost, at the entrance of the Val Mastallone; for here on a fragment of ruined wall there grow at all times sundry flowers, even in the ice and snows of winter; wherefore I had the distich set up where it may be now seen.”

I have never seen it, but must search for it next



## *Varallo, Past and Present*

time I go to Varallo. Torrotti presently says that the country being sterile, the people are hard pressed for food during two-thirds of the year; hence they have betaken themselves to commerce and to sundry arts, with which they overrun the world, returning home but once or twice a year, with their hands well filled with that which they have garnered, to sustain and comfort themselves with their families; and their toil and the gains that they have made redound no little to the advantage of the states of Milan and Piedmont. He again declares that they maintain their liberty, neither will they brook the least infringement thereon. And their neighbours, he continues, as well as the dwellers in the valley itself, are interested in this; for here, as in some desert or peaceful wilderness, the noble families of Italy and neighbouring provinces have been ever prone to harbour in times of war and trouble.

Then, later, there comes an account of a battle, which I cannot very well understand, but it seems to have been fought on 26th July 1655. The Savoyards were on their way to assist at a siege of Pavia, and were determined to punish the Valsesians *en route*; they had come up from Romagnano to Borgosesia, when the Valsesians attacked them as they were at dinner, and shot off the finger of a general officer who was eating an egg; on this the battle became general, and the Savoyards were caught every way; for the waters of the Sesia had come down in flood during the night. The Germans of Alagna, Rima, and Rimella were in it, somehow, and those of Pregelma in the Val Dobbia. I cannot make out whether the Pregelma people were Germans or merely people; either way, the German-speaking villages in the Val Sesia appear to have been the same two hundred years ago as now. I mean, it does not seem that the German-speaking race extended

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lower down the valley than than now. But at any rate, the queen, or whoever "Madama Reale" may be, was very angry about the battle.

"It is the custom," concludes our author, "in token of holy cheerfulness [*allegria spirituale*] to wear a sprig of pine in the hat on leaving the holy place, to show that the visitor has been there; for it has some fine pine trees. This custom was introduced in royal merriment by Carlo Emanuele I. He put a sprig in his hat, and was imitated by all his court, and the ladies wore the same in their bosom or in their hair. Assuredly it is one of the wonders of the world to see here, amid the amenities and allurements of the country, especially during the summer season, what a continuous *fiesta* or holy fair is maintained. For there come and go torrents of men and women of every nation under heaven. Here you shall see pilgrims and persons in religion of every description, processions, prelates, and often princes and princesses, carriages, litters, *calèches*, equipages, cavalcades accompanied by trumpeters, gay troops of cavaliers, and ladies with plumes in their hats and rich apparel wherewithal to make themselves attractive; and at intervals you shall hear all manner of songs, concerts, and musical instruments, both civil and military, all done with a modest and devout cheerfulness of demeanour, by which I am reminded of nothing so strongly as of the words of the Psalmist in the which he saith 'Come and see the works of the Lord, for He hath done wonders upon earth.'"

It must have been something like our own Tunbridge Wells or Bath in the last century. Indeed, one is tempted to think that if the sea had come up to Varallo, it must have been almost more like Margate than Jerusalem. Nor can we forget the gentle rebuke

## *Varallo, Past and Present*

administered on an earlier page to those who came neither on business nor for devotion's sake, but out of mere idle curiosity, and bringing with them company which the good Canon designates as scandalous. *Mais nous avons changé tout cela.*

I have allowed myself to quote so freely from Torrotti, as thinking that the reader will glean more incidentally from these fragments about the genius of Varallo and its antecedents than he would get from pages of disquisition on my own part. Returning to the Varallo of modern times, I would say that even now that the railway has been opened, the pleasantest way of getting there is still over the Colma from Pella opposite Orta. I always call this road "the root," for I once saw it thus described, obviously in good faith, in the visitors' book at one of the inns in Varallo. The gentleman said he had found "the root" without any difficulty at Pella, had taken it all the way to Varallo, and it was delicious. He said it was one of the finest "roots" he had ever seen, and it was only nine or ten miles long.

There were one or two other things in that book, of which, while I am about it, I should like to deliver my mind. A certain man who wrote a bold round hand signed his name "Tom Taylor"—doubtless not the late well-known art critic and dramatic writer, but some other person of the same name—in the visitors' book of the Hotel Leone d'Oro at Orta, and added the word "disgusted." I saw this entry, then comparatively recent, in 1871, and on going to the Hotel d'Italia at Varallo, found it repeated—"Tom Taylor disgusted." The entries in each case were probably aimed at the Sacro Monte, and not at the inn; but they grated on me, as they must have done on many other English visitors;

## *Ex Voto*

and I saw with pleasure that some one had written against the second of them the following epigram, which is too neat not to be preserved. It ran:

“ Oh wretched Tom Taylor, disgusted at Orta,  
At Varallo we find him disgusted again;  
The feeling's contagious, I really have caught a  
Disgust for Tom Taylor—he travels in vain.”

Who, I wonder, was it who could fling off such an apt impromptu, and how many more mute inglorious writers have we not who might do anything they chose if they would only choose to do anything at all? Some one else had written on an earlier page:

### I

“ While you've that which makes the mare go  
You should stay at this albergo,

Bona in esse and in posse  
Are dispensed by Joseph Rossi.

### II

Ask him and he'll set before ye  
Vino, birra e liquori,

Asti, Grignolino, Sherry  
Prezzi moderati—very.”

There was more, but I have forgotten it. Joseph Rossi was a famous old waiter long since retired, something like Pietro at the Hotel Rosa Rossa at Casale, whom all that country side knew perfectly well. This last entry reminds me of a somewhat similar one which I saw some five and thirty years ago at the inn at Harlech:

## *Varallo, Past and Present*

### I

“Τῆδε πᾶν ἄριστον ἔστι  
Δείπνον οἶνον καὶ γὰρ ἡδύ.  
By this 'ere I mean to testi-  
fy how very well they feed you.

### II

Quam superba sit ruina,  
Ipsa sua semper laus,  
And the castle—nothing finer,  
With its ivy and jackdaws.”

It is a pity the art of writing such pleasing little poems should be now so generally neglected in favour of more ambitious compositions. Whatever brevity may be as regards wit it is certainly the soul of all agreeable poetry.

But again to return to Varallo, or rather to the way of reaching it by the Colma. There is nothing in North Italy more beautiful than this walk, with its park-like chestnut-covered slopes of undulating pasture land dotted about with the finest thatched barns to be found outside Titian. We might almost fancy that Handel had it in his mind when he wrote his divine air “Verdi Prati.” Certainly no country can be better fitted either to the words or music. It continues in full beauty all the way to Civiasco, where the carriage road begins that now goes down into the main road between Varallo and Novara, joining it a mile and a half or so below Varallo.

Close to the point of juncture there is a chapel of singularly graceful elegant design, called the Madonna di Loreto. To this chapel I will again return: it is covered with frescoes. Near it there is an open triangular piece of grass land on which a murderer was beheaded within the memory of persons still living. A

## *Ex Voto*

wild old man, who looked like an executioner broken loose from the Flagellation chapel on the Sacro Monte, but who was quite tame and kind to us when we came to know him, told Jones and myself this last summer that he remembered seeing the murderer brought here and beheaded, this being as close as might be to the place where the murder had been committed. We were at first rather sceptical, but on inquiry at Varallo found that there had been an execution here, the last in the open country, somewhere about the year 1835.

From this spot two roads lead to Varallo; one somewhat circuitous by Mantegna, a village notable for a remarkable fresco outside the church, in which the Virgin is appearing to a lady and gentleman as they are lying both of them fast asleep in a large bed, with their two dear little round heads on a couple of comfortable pillows. The three Magi in the very interesting frescoes behind the choir in the church of S. Abbondio at Como are, if I remember, all in one bed when the angel comes to tell them about the star, and I fancy they have a striped counterpane, but it is some time since I saw the frescoes; at any rate the angel was not a lady. We had often before seen the Virgin appear to a lady in bed, and even to a gentleman in bed, but never before to a lady and a gentleman both in the same bed. She is not, however, so much appearing to them as sitting upon them, and I should say she was pretty heavy. The fresco is dated 1641.

The other road is the direct one, and passes the old church of St. Mark, outside which there are some charming fifteenth-century frescoes by nobody in particular, and among them a cow who, at the instance of St. Mark, is pinning a bear or wolf to a tree in a most resolute determined manner.

There are other frescoes on this church by the

## *Varallo, Past and Present*

Varallese painter Luini (not to be confounded with Bernardino), but I do not remember them as remarkable.

Up to this point the two highest peaks of Monte Rosa are still visible when clouds permit; here they disappear behind nearer mountains, and in a few more hundred yards Varallo is entered.

IN GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION VARALLO IS the most western city of North Italy in which painting and sculpture were endemic. Turin, Novara, Vercelli, Casale, Ivrea, Biella, Alessandria, and Aosta have no endemic art comparable to that of the cities east of Milan. Bergamo, Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, Padua, not to mention Venice and the cities of the Friuli, not only produced artists who have made themselves permanently famous, but are themselves, in their architecture and external features generally, works of art as impressive as any they contain; they are stamped with the widely-spread instinctive feeling for beauty with which the age and people that reared them must assuredly have been inspired. The western cities have perhaps suffered more from war, nevertheless it is hard to think that the beauty so characteristic of the eastern Lombardic cities should fail so conspicuously, at least by comparison, in the western, if the genius of the places had been the same. All cities are symptomatic of the men who built them, towns no less than bodily organization being that unknown something which we call mind or spirit made manifest in material form. Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, and Italians—to name them in alphabetical order, are not more distinct in their several faults and virtues than are London, Paris, Berlin, and Rome, in the impression they leave on those who see them. How closely in each case does the appearance of the city correspond with the genius of the nation of which it is the capital. The same holds good more or less with the provincial cities of any country. They have each in a minor degree their distinctive evidences of character, and it will hardly be denied that while the North Italian genius is indebted to the cities of Piedmont for perhaps its more robust and vigorous elements, it owes its command of beauty



## Bernardino Caimi

whether of form or colour to Lombardy rather than to Piedmont. It seems to have been ordained that an endemic interest in art should not cross the Po northward to the west of the Ticino, and to this rule Varallo is only partially an exception; the reasons which led to its being an exception at all will be considered presently. I know, of course, that Novara, and still more Vercelli, contain masterpieces by Gaudenzio Ferrari, but in each case the art was exotic, and with the not very noteworthy exceptions of Lanini, Difendente Ferrari di Chivasso, and Macrino d'Alba, I do not at the moment call to mind the name of a single even high second-class painter or sculptor who has hailed from west of the Valsesia.

The exceptional position of Varallo as regards North Italian art must be referred mainly to its selection by Bernardino Caimi as the site for the New Jerusalem which he founded there at the end of the fifteenth century; a few words, therefore, concerning him will not be out of place here. I learn from Torrotti that he was a "Frate Minore Osservante di S. Francesco," and came of the noble and illustrious Milanese family of the Counts Caimi. He had been Patriarch of the Holy Land, and, as I find stated in Signor Galloni's excellent work already referred to,<sup>1</sup> had been employed on important missions in the island of Cyprus, chiefly in connection with the reformation of abuses. Full of zeal and devotion he returned to his native country, and ere long conceived the design of reproducing in Italy a copy of the most important sites in the Holy Land, for the comfort and greater commodity of so many Christians who, being unable to commit themselves to long and weary voyages by land and sea, and among infidels, might gather thence some portion of that

<sup>1</sup> *Uomini e Fatti*, etc., p. 65, etc.

## Ex Voto

spiritual fruit which were otherwise beyond their reach.

Old and mendicant as he was, he was nothing daunted by the magnitude of the task before him, and searched Lombardy from one end to the other in his desire to provide Providence with a suitable abode. For a long while he sought in vain, and could find no place that was really like Jerusalem, but at last, towards the end of 1491, he came to Varallo alone, and had hardly got there before he felt himself rapt into an ecstasy, in the which he was drawn towards the Sacro Monte; when he got up to the plain on the top of the mountain which was then called "La Parete," perceiving at once its marvellous resemblance to Jerusalem, even to the existence of another mountain hard by which was like Calvary, he threw himself on the ground and thanked God in a transport of delight. It is said that for some time previously the shepherds who watched their flocks on this solitary height had been talking of nothing but of heavenly harmonies that had been heard coming from the sky; that Caimi himself while yet in the Holy Land had been shown this place in a vision; and that on reaching an eminence called "Sceletta" he had been conducted to the site itself by the song of a bird which sang with such extraordinary sweetness that he had been constrained to follow it.

I should have set this bird down as a blue rock thrush or *passero solitario*, for I know these birds breed yearly on the Sacro Monte, and no bird sings so sweetly as they do, but we are expressly told that Caimi did not reach Varallo till the end of the year, and the *passeri solitarii* have all migrated by the end of August. We have seen, however, that Milano Scarrognini actually founded a chapel in October 1491, so Torrotti is wrong in his date, and Caimi may have come in 1490, and perhaps in

## Bernardino Caimi

August, before the *passeri* were gone. There can be little doubt in fact that he came, or at any rate chose his site, before 1486.

Whatever the bird may have been, Caimi now communicated his design to the Consiglio della Vicinanza at Varallo, through Milano Scarrognini, who was a member of the body, and who also gave support in money; negotiations were not finally concluded until 14th April 1493, on which day, as we have already seen, the site of the monastery of S. Maria delle Grazie was conveyed to the Padri dell' Osservanza with the concession of a right to build their New Jerusalem on the adjoining mountain—which they had already begun to do for some time past.

Divine assistance was manifest in the ease with which everything had been arranged, but Torrotti goes on to assure us that it was presently made still clearer. The design had been to begin with a reproduction of the Holy Sepulchre, and hardly had the workmen begun to dig for the foundation of this first work, when a stone was found, not only resembling the one which covered the actual Holy Sepulchre itself, but an absolute facsimile of it in all respects—as like it, in fact, or even more so, than Varallo was to Jerusalem. The testimony to this was so notorious, and the fact was so soon and widely known, that pilgrims flocked in crowds and brought gifts enough to bring the first abode of the Fathers with the chapel beside it to a speedy and successful completion. Everything having been now started auspiciously, and the Blessed Bernardino having been allowed to look, as it were, into the promised land, God took him to Himself on the 5th day of the Ides of February 1496, or—as I have above said that the inscription on Caimi's tomb declares—in 1499.

The churches, both the one below the mountain

## Ex Voto

in which Gaudenzio's great series of frescoes may be still seen, and the one on the top, which stood on the site now occupied by the large house that stands to the right of the present church, and is called the Casino, were consecrated between the 5th and 7th days of September 1501, and by this time several of the chapels with figures in them had been taken in hand, and were well advanced if not completed.

Fassola's version of Bernardino Caimi's visit is more guarded than Torrotti's is. Before going on to it I will say here the little that need be said about Fassola himself. I find from Signor Galloni's *Uomini e Fatti* (p. 208) that he was born at Rassa above Bucioleto in the Val Grande, on 19th September 1648. His family had one house at Rassa, and another at Varallo, which last is believed to have been what is now the hotel Croce Bianca, at which I always myself stay. Torrotti, in his preface, claims to have been one of his masters; he also says that Fassola was only eighteen when he wrote his work on the Sacro Monte, and that he had published a work when he was only fourteen. The note given by Signor Galloni (p. 233) settles it that Fassola was born "anno D. 1648 die 19 septembris hora 22 min. 30," so that either the book lay some years unpublished, or he was over twenty when he wrote it. Like the edition of Caccia already referred to, it is dated a year later than the one in which it actually appeared, so that the present custom of post-dating late autumn books is not a new one. In the preface the writer speaks of his pen as being "tenera non tanto per talento quanto per l'età." In the same preface he speaks of himself as having a double capacity, one as a delegate to the governing body of the valley, and the other as a canon; but he must mean some kind of lay canon, for I cannot find that he was ever ordained. In 1672 he published his

## Fassola

work *La Valsesia descritta*, which according to Signor Galloni is more hastily written than his earlier work. On 14th December, the same year, he left the Valsesia and travelled to France, keeping a journal for some time, which Signor Galloni tells us still existed in 1873 in the possession of Abate Cav. Carestia of Riva Valdobbia. He went to Paris, and appears to have stayed there till 1683, when he returned to Varallo, and the Valsesia.

He found his country torn by faction, and was immediately hailed by all parties as the one man whom all could agree to elect as Regent General of the Valley. He was elected, and on 5th October convened his first general council of the Valsesia. He seems to have been indefatigable as an administrator during the short time he held office, but in the year 1684 was deposed by the Milanese, who on the 3rd December sent a body of armed men to seize him and take him to Milan. He was warned in time to fly, and escaped to France, where according to some he died, while others say that he settled in Poland and there attained high distinction. Nothing, however, is known for certain about him later than the year 1684 or the beginning of 1685.

In 1686 Torrotti published his book. He says that Fassola during his regency repeatedly desired him “ripigliare questa relatione per commodità dei Pellegrini, Divoti, visitanti,” and that so much new matter had come to light since Fassola’s time that a new work was called for. Fassola, he says, even in the midst of his terrible misfortunes, continued to take the warmest interest in his native city, and in the Sacro Monte, where it appears he had been saluted by a very memorable and well-known miracle, which was so well known in Torrotti’s time that it was not necessary to tell us what it was. Fassola may or may not have urged

## *Ex Voto*

Torrotti to write a second work upon the *Sacro Monte*, but he can hardly have intended him to make it little more than a transcript of his own book. If new facts had come to light they do not appear in Torrotti's pages. He very rarely adds to Fassola, and never corrects him; when Fassola is wrong Torrotti is wrong also; even when something is added I have a strong suspicion that it comes from Fassola's second book. On the whole I am afraid I regard Torrotti as somewhat of a plagiarist—at least as regards his matter, for his manner is his own and is very quaint, garrulous, and pleasing.

Fassola's work is full of inaccuracies, and of such inaccuracies as can only be explained on the supposition that the writer resided mainly at Rassa, wrote his book there, and relied too much upon notes which he did not verify after his work was written. Nevertheless, as Signor Galloni justly says, "he must be allowed the merit of having preserved an immense mass of matter from otherwise almost certain destruction, and his pages when subjected to rigid examination and criticism furnish abundant material to the writer of genuine history."

He leans generally much less towards the miraculous than Torrotti does. After saying, for example, that Bernardino Caimi had returned from Jerusalem in 1481 full of devotion and with the fixed intention of reproducing the Holy City on Italian soil, he continues:

"With this holy intent the good ecclesiastic journeyed to the mountains of Biella, and thence to the Val d'Ossola, and thence to several places in the Valsesia, which of all others was the valley in which he was most inclined to unburden his mind of the treasure of his heroic design. Finally, arriving at Varallo, as the place of most resort, where most of those would come

## *Fassola*

whose means and goodwill would incline them to works of piety, he resolved to choose the most suitable site that he could here find. According to some, while taking counsel with himself and with all who could help him, the site which we now adore was shown him in a vision; others say that on walking without the town he was seduced by the angelic warbling of a bird, and thus ravished to a spot where he found all things in such order for his design that he settled upon it then and there. Many hold as true the story of certain shepherds who about a fortnight earlier than the coming of the father, heard songs of more than earthly sweetness as they were keeping watch over their flocks by night."

"But," concludes Fassola, with some naïveté considering the reserve he has shown in accepting any of the foregoing stories, "take it in whatever way you will, the inception of the place was obviously miraculous."

WHETHER MIRACULOUS OR NOT, THE early history of the Sacro Monte is undoubtedly obscure, and the reader will probably have ere this perceived that the accounts given by Fassola and Torrotti stand in some need of reconstruction. The resemblance between Varallo and Jerusalem is too far fetched to have had any *bona fide* effect upon a man of travel and of affairs, such as Caimi certainly was; it is hardly greater than the famous one between Monmouth and Macedon; there is, indeed, a river—not to say two—at Varallo, and there is a river also only twenty-five miles off Jerusalem; doubtless at one time or another there have been crucifixions in both, but some other reason must be sought for the establishment of a great spiritual stronghold at the foot of the Alps, than a mere desire to find the place which should most remind its founder of the Holy City. Why this great effort in a remote and then almost inaccessible province of the Church, far from any of the religious centres towards which one would have expected it to gravitate? The answer suggests itself as readily as the question; namely, that it was an attempt to stem the torrent of reformed doctrines already surging over many an Alpine pass, and threatening a moral invasion as fatal to the spiritual power of Rome as earlier physical invasions of Northmen had been to her material power.

Those who see the Italian sub-alpine valleys of to-day as devoted to the Church of Rome are apt to forget how nearly they fell away from her in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and what efforts, both by way of punishment and allurements, she was compelled to make before she could retain them in her grasp. In most of them the ferment caused by the introduction of the reformed doctrines was in the end stamped out; but in



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some, as in the Valle di Poschiavo, and the Val Bregaglia, Protestantism is still either the predominant creed or not uncommon. I do not mention the Vaudois valleys of Piedmont, for I am told these were Protestant before either Huss or Luther preached.

The Valsesians had ere now given proof of a tendency towards heresy, but they were a people whom it was worth while making every effort to retain. They have ever been, as we have seen it said already, a vigorous, sturdy, independent race, imbued, in virtue perhaps of their mixed descent, with a large share of the good points both of Southern and Northern nations. They are Italians; but Italians of the most robust and Roman type, combining in a remarkable degree Southern grace and versatility with Northern enterprise and power of endurance. It is no great stretch of imagination to suppose that Bernardino Caimi was alive to dangers that were sufficiently obvious, and that he may have been more particularly led to the Valsesia, by its quasi-independence, and perhaps, also, by the fact of its being near enough to be reasonably accessible from the main cities of North Italy and remote enough at once to serve the purposes of pilgrimage and to lie outside the path of those wars from which the plains of Piedmont and Lombardy have been rarely long exempt. If so, the event has justified his selection. It may be noted that the movement set on foot by Caimi extended afterwards to other places, always, with the exception of Crea, on the last slopes of the Alps before the plains of Lombardy and Piedmont begin. Varese, Locarno, Orta, Varallo, Oropa, Graglia, S. Ignazio, not to mention S. Giovanni di Andorno, have all of them something of the spiritual frontier fortress about them, and, I imagine, are all more or less directly indebted to the Reformation for their inception.

## Ex Voto

Confining our attention to Varallo, the history of the Sacro Monte divides itself into two main periods; the first, from the foundation to the visit of S. Carlo Borromeo in 1578; the second, from the visit of S. Carlo to the present day. The first of these periods begins with 1486, in which year the present Sacro Monte was no doubt formally contemplated, if not actually commenced. That it was contemplated is shown by the inscription on Caimi's grave already given, and also by the first of the two deeds given in Signor Galloni's notes, from which it appears<sup>1</sup> that under the brief of 21st December 1486 Caimi had powers to take over the land now covered by the chapels, *even though he should be absent*—it being evidently intended that the land should be conveyed at once, and before he could return from Jerusalem, for which place he started in 1487. Moreover, there remains one small chapel with frescoes that can hardly be later than 1485-1490. This is now numbered 45, and is supposed by many to be older even than Caimi's first visit. It may be so, but there is nothing to show that it actually was. I have seen a date scratched on it which it is said is 1437, but the four is really a five, which in old writing is often taken for a four, and the frescoes, which in their own way are of considerable merit, would be most naturally assigned to about the date 1485-1490. I do not think there can be a doubt that we have in this chapel the earliest existing building on the Sacro Monte, but find it impossible to form any opinion as to whether it was in existence before Bernardino Caimi's time, or no.

In the second of the two deeds given by Signor Galloni (p. 85), the following passage occurs:

“ Et similiter fecerunt ipsi Sindici, et Procuratores, ut suprà introducendo ipsum Patrem Vicarium ut suprà in

<sup>1</sup> *Uomini e Fatti*, p. 83.

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Eremitorium sancti Sepulchri existent. in loco ubi dicebatur super pariete, aperiendo eidem ostia dicti Eremitorij, et dando eidem claues Ostiorum dicti eremitorij, et cum deambulari faciendo in eo, et similiter in Hortis dicti Eremitorij, dando eidem in gremium ut suprà de terris, herbis, et frondibus, et lapidibus existen. in locis prædictis, *et similiter in Capella existente subtus crucem, et in Capellam Ascensionis Ædificatam super Monte prædicto.* Qui locus est de membris dicti Monasterii suprascripti.”

Neither Signor Galloni, who pointed out this passage to me, nor I, though we have more than once discussed the matter on the ground itself, can make out what chapels are here intended. It is probable that there was an early chapel of the Ascension, and the wooden figure of Christ on the fountain in the piazza before the church was very likely taken from it, but there is no evidence to show where it stood.

Signor Arienta tells me that the chapel now occupied by the Temptation in the Wilderness was formerly a chapel of the Ascension, but I did not fully understand his reasons for saying so. It was filled at an early date with figures probably by Gaudenzio that represented Christ carrying the Cross on the road to Calvary. It was originally painted black on account of its subject, and was called “La Chiesa Nera.” We find it as this in Pellegrino Tibaldi’s plan. Few, however, who read Caccia’s notes of sequence with due attention will doubt that the chapel had ceased to be the Chiesa Nera and had become the Temptation chapel before 1586.

Some hold the chapels referred to in the deed above quoted from to have included the present Annunciation, Salutation, and Sleeping St. Joseph block—or part of it. Others hold them to have referred to the chapels now filled by the Pietà and the Entombment (Nos. 40 and 41); but it should not be forgotten that by 1493 the

## *Ex Voto*

chapels of St. Francis and the Holy Sepulchre were already in existence, though no mention is made of them; and there may have been other chapels also already built of which no mention is made. Thus immediately outside the St. Francis chapel and towards the door leading to the Holy Sepulchre, there is a small recess in which is placed an urn of iron that contains the head of Bernardino Caimi with a Latin inscription; and hard by there is another inscription which runs as follows:

“Magnificus D. Milanus Scarrogninus hoc Sepulcrum cum fabrica sibi contigua Christo posuit die septimo Octobris MCCCCLXXXI. R. P. Frater Bernardinus de Mediolano Ordinis Minorum de Observ. sacra hujus montis excogitavit loca, ut hic Hierusalem videat qui peragrare nequit.”

We may say with some confidence that the present chapel No. 45, those numbered 40 and 41, the block containing the St. Francis and Holy Sepulchre chapels, and probably the Presepio, Adoration of the Shepherds, and Circumcision chapels—though it may be doubted whether these last contained the figures that they now do—were in existence before the year 1500. Part if not all of the block containing the S. Casa di Loreto, in which the Annunciation is now found, is also probably earlier than 1500, as also an early Agony in the Garden now long destroyed, but of which we are told that the figures were originally made of wood. Over and above these there was a Cena, Capture, Flagellation, and an Ascension chapel, all of which contained wooden figures, and cannot be dated later than the three or four earliest years of the sixteenth century. No wooden figure is to be dated later than this, for when once an oven for baking clay had been made (and this must have been done soon after Gaudenzio took the works on the

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Sacro Monte in hand) the use of wood was discarded never to be resumed.

According to both Fassola and Torrotti, the first chapel erected on the Sacro Monte was that of S. Francesco, with its adjacent reproduction of the Holy Sepulchre. According to Bordiga the first was the Entombment, containing nine figures of wood, or, as the earlier writers say, eight. Bordiga probably means that the Entombment was the earliest chapel with figures in it, and the other writers that the St. Francis chapel was the first in which mass was said. These last speak very highly of the wooden figures in the Entombment chapel, and so more guardedly does Bordiga. I will return to them when I come to the present group of nine by Luigi Marchesi, a sculptor of Saltrio, which were substituted for the old ones in 1826. The early writers say that there was no fresco background to this chapel, and this suggests that the attempt to combine sculpture and painting was not part of the initial scheme, though soon engrafted on to it, inasmuch as this is the only chapel about which I find it expressly stated by early writers that it was without a fresco background ("senza pittura alcuna").<sup>1</sup> Though there was no fresco background, Bordiga says there was a fresco painted, doubtless done very early in his career, by Gaudenzio Ferrari, outside the chapel just above the iron grating through which the visitor must look. Probably the original scheme was to have sculptured figures inside the chapels, and frescoes outside; by an easy modification these last were transferred from the outside to the inside, and so designed as to form an integral part of the composition: the daring scheme of combining the utmost resources of both painting and sculpture in a single work was thus gradually evolved rather than

<sup>1</sup> Fassola, p. 112.

## Ex Voto

arrived at *per saltum*. Assuming, however, the currently received date of 1503 or 1504 as correct for the originals of the frescoes now in the Pietà chapel, the conception as carried out in the greater number of the existing chapels had then attained the shape from which no subsequent departure was made.

Returning to Gaudenzio's fresco outside the Entombment chapel, Bordiga says that Caccia gave the following lines on this work:

“ Sotto un vicino portico di fuore  
Portato a sepelir è di pittura  
Un Cristo; che non mai Zeuxi pittore  
Di questo finse piu bella figura,

\*

Che un San Francesco possa pareggiare,  
Pinto più inanzi sopra d'un altare.”

The reader will note that the fresco is here expressly stated to be “di fuore” or outside and not inside the chapel.

Both Fassola and Torrotti place this fresco on the outside wall of the chapel of St. Francis, but Bordiga is probably right in saying it was on the Entombment chapel. No trace of it remains, nor yet of the other works by Gaudenzio, which all three writers agree were in the S. Francesco chapel, though they must all have been some few years later than the chapel itself. These consisted of portraits of Milano Scarrognini with Father Beato Candido Ranzo upon the gospel, or right, side of the altar, and of Scarrognini's wife and son with Bernardino Caimi, on the epistle side. According to Bordiga, Gaudenzio also painted a St. Anthony of Padua, and a St. Helena, one on either side the grating. Inside the chapel over the altar was a painting of St.

## *History of the Sacro Monte*

Francis receiving the stigmata, also by Gaudenzio. This is the only one of his works in or about the S. Francesco chapel which still exists; it is now in the pinacoteca of the Museum at Varallo, but is not, so far as I could judge of it, one of his best pictures. The other works were in a decayed condition in 1703, when they were removed, and the chapel was redecorated by Francesco Leva, a painter of Milan.

The Crucifixion chapel is believed to have been begun and finished between 1520 and 1530. I found three excellently written dates of 1529 scrawled upon the fresco background, and Signor G. Arienta has lately found a small 1523. One of these dates, "1529 Die 26 Ottobre Johannes Antoninus," is especially clear, and the other three leave no doubt what year was intended. I do not, however, think it would be safe to infer from the date found by Signor Arienta that the whole work had been completed by that year. It may have been only just begun. But Signor Arienta has suggested to me that the episcopal edict of 1524, which may still be seen in the portico of the Temptation chapel, may account for our finding no names scrawled between the years 1523 and 1529, by which time vigilance had again become relaxed and the public conscience less susceptible. I think some of the scars made by inscription have been filled with paint, while others certainly have not—as though the work had been in parts retouched, not so very long ago. In fact, my own impression, *quantum valeat*, is that the work has been largely, and perhaps more than once, "restored," and that not a little of the carrying out of the design, as regards the frescoes, was entrusted to pupils or assistants.

The Magi chapel must be assigned to some date between the years 1530 and 1539—I should say probably to about 1538, but I will return to this later on. Torrotti

## *Ex Voto*

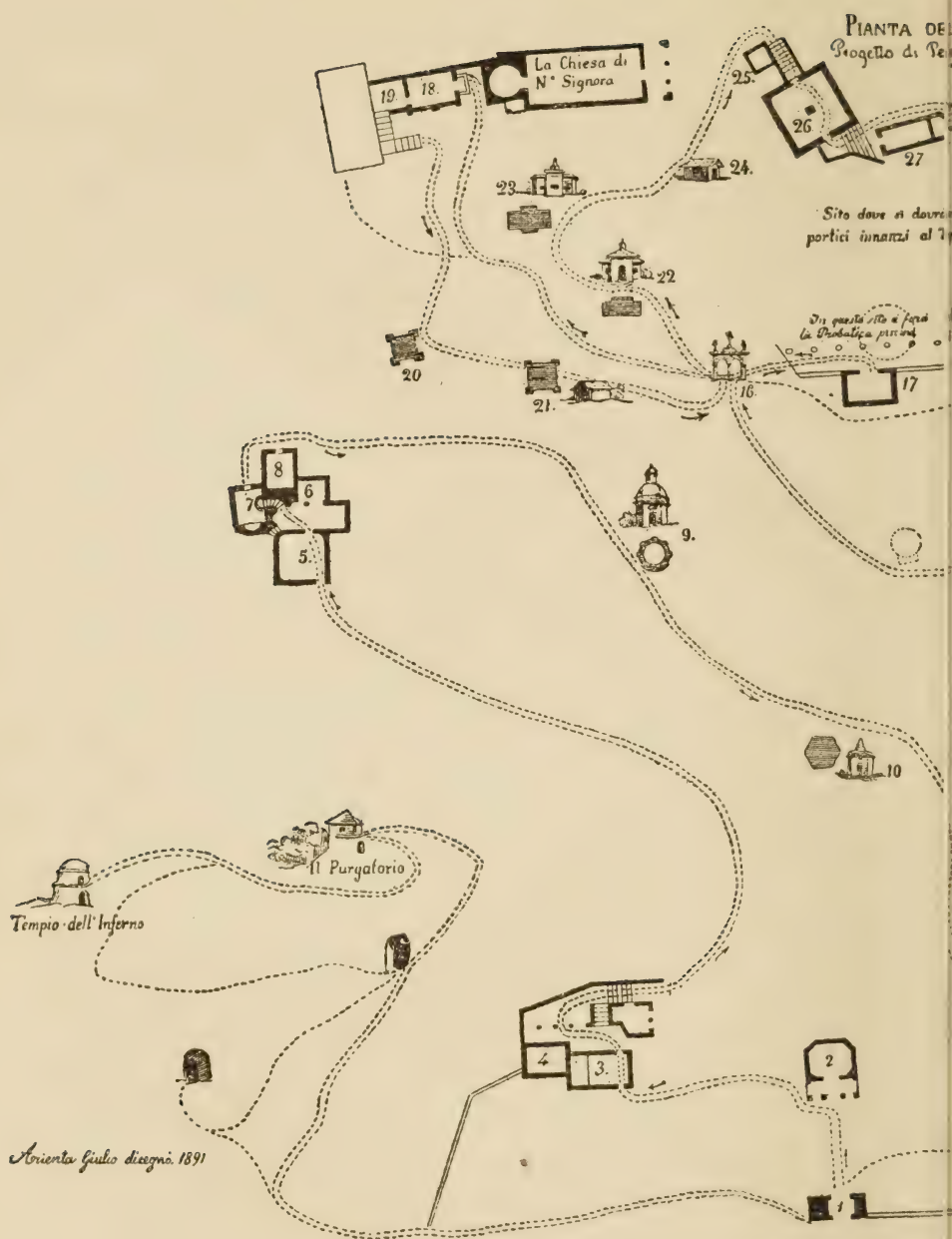
says that some of the figures in the Christ taken for the last time before Pilate (chapel No. 32) are by Gaudenzio, as also some paintings that were preserved when the Palazzo di Pilato was built, but I can see no sign of either one or the other now; nevertheless it is likely enough that several figures—transformed as we shall presently see that the workmen of that time knew very well how to transform them—are doing duty in the Ecce Homo and in more than one other chapel. So cunningly did they disguise a figure when they wanted to alter its character and action that it would be no easy matter to find out exactly what was done; if they could turn an Eve, as they did, into a very passable Roman soldier assisting at the capture of Christ, they could make anything out of anything. A figure was a figure, and was not to be thrown away lightly.

Soon after the completion of the Magi chapel the work flagged in consequence of the wars then devastating the provinces of North Italy; nevertheless by the middle of the sixteenth century we learn from Torrotti that some nineteen chapels had been completed.

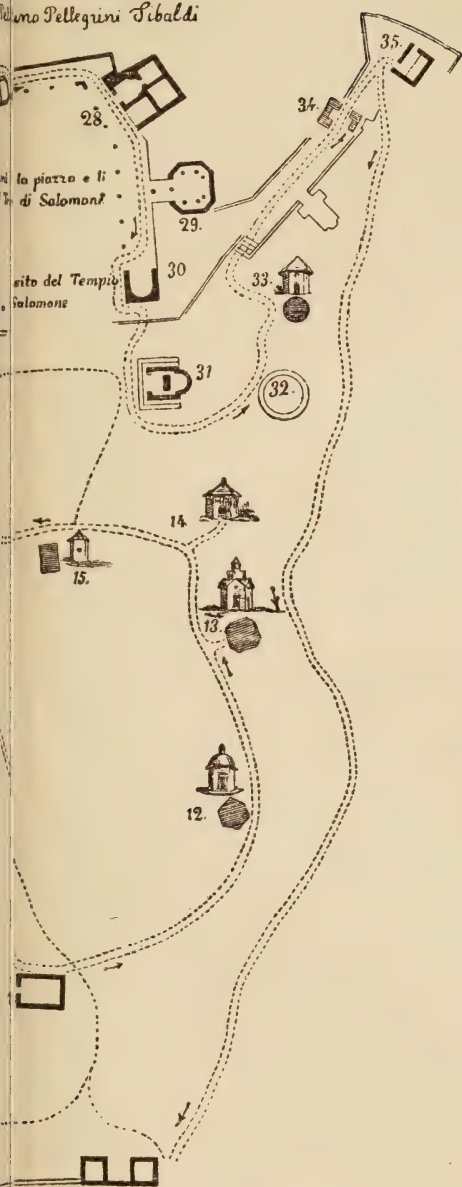
I am unable to settle precisely in every case which these chapels were, nor can I make out quite nineteen chapels, but Tibaldi's plan enables us to approach certainty nearly enough for practical purposes, and the reader will not be much in error if he sees the Sacro Monte by the year 1550 as consisting of the following chapels: Adam and Eve, but not in its present place, nor with the present figures, Annunciation, Magi, Adoration of the Infant Jesus by the Shepherds, Adoration by Joseph and Mary, Circumcision (but not the present figures nor fresco background), Last Supper, Agony in the Garden, Capture, Flagellation, the original Journey to Calvary (then in the present Temptation chapel), Fainting Madonna, Crucifixion, En-







TIBALDI'S PLAN OF THE SACRO MONTE (15)



1. La Porta principale.
2. Il Tempio di Adamo ed Eva.
3. Madonna di Loreto.
4. S. Elisabetta, ora l'Annunziata di M. Vergine.
5. I Magi.
6. La Natività.
7. La Purificazione.
8. L'Angelo che annuncia a S. Joseph che fugga in Egitto.
9. La Strage degli Innocenti.
10. La Madonna che va in Egitto.
11. Il Battesimo di N. S.  
Qui è ora Gesù che porta la Croce, che oggi si dice la Chiesa Negra.
12. La Tentazione.
13. La Samaritana.
14. Il Paralitico.
15. Il Figlio della Vedova.
16. La Porta Aurea.
17. Qui è ora la Presa che va levata. Qui si farà Lazaro risuscitato.
18. La Cena.
19. Qui si farà N. S. che lava i piedi agli Apostoli.
20. Gesù all'Orto.
21. La Presa.
22. Casa di Caifas.
23. Casa di Pilato.
24. Qui si farà N. S. che porta la Croce.
25. La M. V. Tramortita.
26. Cristo in Croce.
27. G. C. deposto dalla Croce.
28. Il Sepolcro di N. S.
29. Gesù appare alla Maddalena.
30. Qui si farà N. S. apparire alli due Discepoli in Emaus.
31. Qui si farà N. S. apparire alli due Apostoli, ora si vede l'Angelo d'Iddio annunciar alla Madonna il dover passare a miglior vita.
32. L'Ascensione.
33. Lo Spirito Santo.
34. Qui si farà il Giudizio.
35. S. Sepolcro di Maria Vergine.



## Tibaldi

tombment, Holy Sepulchre, Appearance of the risen Christ to Mary Magdalene (now perished), Sepulchre of the Virgin, and the old church of the Assumption. Three of these, the old Adam and Eve, Agony in the Garden, and the Flagellation are omitted in Tibaldi's plan of 1570, probably as being in decayed condition.

*Explanation of Pellegrino Tibaldi's Plan<sup>1</sup> from a copy provided by Signor Giulio Arienta. (Translated.)*

\*

“Nor did they show less prudence in surrounding it with walls, as may be seen, only enclosing that part which is more convenient and more suitable for such buildings than any other; and therefore I am glad that this girdle of wall has been provided with such an admirable doorway, made of marble and richly ornamented as you may see. I wish indeed it were possible to reach this doorway from the road which starts from the above-mentioned town of Varallo ascending pleasantly to the height of the Mount which is in front although rather more towards the North, and that it should go up from the aforesaid woods to the Piazza which is now in front of the doorway. This Piazza I should like to see widened and two fountains of running water constructed at its upper end, facing one another with seats placed round them, so that those arriving exhausted might rest and refresh themselves. This, in addition to the comfort that it would offer, would provide a wonderful ornamentation for the doorway, well suited to the beautiful stretch of country that is the

<sup>1</sup> It is clear from Butler's notes that he intended to give Tibaldi's plan in any new English edition of *Ex Voto*. It is therefore given here, together with the explanation, at the same point in the text at which it occurs in Rizzetti's Italian version of *Ex Voto*.—A.T.B.

## *Ex Voto*

object of search within, and to the number of fine and decorous buildings that are to be seen there. It is true that, as they were constructed at various times and by various people who were more observant of immediate convenience than of the aim of the original founders, these buildings are arranged without order, so that it very often happens that those who go visiting the mysteries come first to the buildings that they ought to come to afterwards—and this seems to me a defect of a very pronounced kind. Beginning here, therefore, with the expression of my own opinion, I consider it necessary that the existing roads should be destroyed, for they lead in a confused manner to the inconveniences I have mentioned, and that a new road should be made which should of itself lead everyone naturally to follow out in their order the mysteries in which the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ is shown from beginning to end. The result of this would be that pious worshippers enticed to a large extent by the road, which would be a very attractive one, would find greater pleasure in the mysteries and would contemplate them with greater devotion. And so I will start with the chapel that is to be found opposite the door I have mentioned above; this chapel, as may be well understood, is decorated with a portico in front which, supported on marble pillars, affords great convenience in the entrance to the chapel. In the chapel itself, to serve as a beginning to everything, the statues of Adam and Eve should be placed under the tree where the Devil, twined round ensnaringly in the form of a serpent, caused them to be precipitated into universal perdition by persuading them to eat the forbidden fruit. I should particularly like this mystery to be displayed here in that it was the cause and origin of all that will be revealed hereafter.

“Following the same road we come to the church

## *Tibaldi*

called S. Maria di Loreto, which, being built in imitation of the real church of that name, I would not have removed but merely adorned without, as may be seen in the picture of it in this book. I am indeed of opinion that the mystery which is placed next in order in a chapel of the Annunciation hard by should be there, for the sake of convenience; but I should like the figures arranged better, so as to express more adequately that purity and goodness which are the distinguishing attributes of the Glorious Virgin; and I should like in addition to see in this chapel the mystery of the pious Visitation, with the expression of the Virgin's humility and of St. Elizabeth's reverence. The chapel in which the Magi are seen travelling under the Star's guidance to the place in which our Redeemer was laid, comes next on this same road; and, although for the sake of accuracy I should have liked this mystery to appear later on, its removal would be too difficult, seeing that the work is fashioned with such excellence. This excellence is splendidly revealed in the gestures of the Kings, who are seen full of majesty and devotion, dismounted from their horses to worship the Redeemer of the World, and followed by a large crowd and by wagons, all very well depicted. The position, immediately adjoining, of Our Lord's Presepio, constructed in imitation of the one in the Holy Land, does not displease me; but I do not care much for the figures in this group; I should like them to express this mystery differently, so that, besides seeing Our Lord, a child laid upon the hay, and the ass and the ox, at the sides, etc. . . .

“By ascending the stairway situated on one side of this chapel, the so-called chapel of the Circumcision is reached, and the name and effect of this chapel I would have changed, as it seems to me much more apposite

## *Ex Voto*

that it should be called the chapel of the Purification. . . .

“ In the chapel which is contiguous to this one, still unfinished as it is, there should be a figure of Joseph reclining languidly in sleep, in his house, to one side. . . . As far as this spot I am satisfied with the original road, which has led us hitherto in a southerly direction; but here the new one that I desire made should be joined on, leading in an easterly direction over the ground I have described; here a small octagonal chapel is to be found, which according to my plan would be altogether rebuilt, and in it the Massacre of the Innocents would be shown. . . .

“ Further on another small octagonal chapel ought to be built, with a sculpture of the Glorious Virgin in the middle of it. . . . The Flight into Egypt.

“ And still proceeding towards the west we come to a church which at the present time is called the Black Church, in which the mystery of Jesus bearing the Cross is to be found; and this, in order that the sequence of the mysteries that are to follow may not be interrupted, should be placed elsewhere, as we shall explain later on, and in its place the Baptism of Our Lord should be shown. . . .

“ Then turning towards the south further on and keeping the same order, another small shrine might be built containing the sculptured figures of Our Lord and Satan. Further on still, I would have a small shrine built, similar to this one, and in it should be placed the mystery of Our Lord and the Woman of Samaria. . . .

“ As we go on, turning somewhat towards the east, I think it suitable that there should be a shrine of circular form, as may be seen in the drawing . . . and the figure of the Redeemer represented, with a large crowd . . . etc. . . .—The Man Sick of the Palsy.



## *Tibaldi*

“Turning then in a direction between south and west, let a chapel be built, etc., etc.—The Widow’s Son.

“A little later directly to the south a small hill, clearly outlined, is encountered, and here I should like to see a round chapel . . . etc.—Mount Tabor.

“Proceeding further on to the foot of this hill we come to a site which I deem suitable for the things that are to follow. Here I should like the Golden Gate of Jerusalem built, and, in front of it, in a small, square, and perfectly formed chapel, The Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. . . .

“After this we come to the scene, already laid out here, of Jesus Christ’s Last Supper with His Disciples, about which I need say nothing except that, the mystery represented within being very well done, it is essential that its walls should be decorated in the way shown in the design; and in the empty place adjoining it I would have a figure of Our Lord washing the feet of His Disciples. . . .

“Keeping to our order it will be necessary to go out from the city by another gate and to come to a chapel which, as I have shown in its proper place in this book, ought to be built here: and here I would have the mystery of the Agony in the Garden portrayed and at a little distance the Three Disciples sleeping.

“A little further towards the east I should like a chapel built showing Judas in the act of betrayal. We should then go back into the city where the House of Caiaphas would be represented . . . and still further towards the east the House of Pilate might be built, with the Scourging of Our Lord, the Crowning with Thorns, and the Ecce Homo.

“At a short distance from here, in another building that I should like made, I would have a representation of Our Lord bearing the Cross on His shoulders in the

## *Ex Voto*

Journey to Calvary; and the existing chapel near by, which shows the Virgin Mother fainting in the arms of her companions at the sight of the ill-treatment of her Son, would remain as it is, except for the decoration of the walls outside.

“The steps of the above-mentioned Mount of Calvary, already existing, would then be ascended and in a part of this Mount Christ would be seen despoiled of His garments, etc.

“Christ upon the Cross. Here to the side Christ is at present seen upon the Cross between the Two Thieves; and I think that the sculptor and the painter have expressed this mystery very well by showing our Redeemer all wounded and striped with blood, and near by the figure of the Virgin Mary who, as though dead, lets herself fall into the arms of her afflicted companions. Nor indeed is it possible for the devout spirit to contemplate with dry eyes this great crowd of ruffians tearing at Christ and beating Him on every side; one is bitterly reviling Him, another mocks Him, this one here is regarding Him fiercely, that one pierces His side, the Centurion is seen taking great care to guard Him, the soldiers throw dice for His raiment, and the great multitude of onlookers stand by; above, the Angels are sorrowing in pity for their Lord, the elements show their distress, and the sun is covered with clouds – truly this mystery is done very well and shows great judgment; and so I would have nothing added except for the renewal of the glass which is in front and which protects the mystery. . . .

“After descending by another stairway a recess is discovered with Christ deposed from the Cross and, in relief, His Mother between the Marys fainting in a most piteous attitude. But in order to put this mystery in its place another chapel must be built, as will be shown in

## *Tibaldi*

the plan, for the construction of which the removal of the above-mentioned arcade near at hand will be necessary. After this we come to the Holy Sepulchre reproduced in imitation and in the exact proportions of the one in the Holy Land. Proceeding further, we come to an existing chapel, round in shape outside and octagonal within, with finely decorated columns, as may be seen, and with Jesus represented as the Gardener and Mary Magdalene at His feet, etc. . . .

“As we go further along by one of the old arcades—which arcades will be demolished to make room for the new buildings—we find a small chapel that I want to have restored in the manner shown by the drawing in this book, and in it I would have Christ portrayed in the garb of a Pilgrim.

“Not far from here is a square chapel in which at present the Angel of the Lord is seen announcing to the Madonna that she is passing to a higher destiny. I would have this chapel restored and the mystery removed, since it does not fit in appropriately here; and I would have the mystery of Jesus Christ appearing to His Disciples set in its place.

“How Our Lord caused the Holy Ghost to descend upon His Disciples.

“The tremendous Last Judgment of the World which should be represented.

“The Limbo from which Our Lord brought the souls of the Holy Fathers will also be constructed.

“In the valley, which is to be preserved, at the entrance to the Mount, Purgatory and Hell will be represented beneath the ground, and above them the Tiburis in the form of vaults, made of artificial coloured glasses, by means of which people will seem to see in these places souls and other things burning with fire, in the manner that accords with each of these mysteries,

## *Ex Voto*

and the road leading thereto will be black, crooked, and so dark that it will cause terror.

“There is still a fairly large church dedicated to the Glorious Virgin Mary, with the statue of the Madonna in the Tomb above the high altar, as though ascended into Heaven, and the figures of the Twelve Apostles in relief set round.

“In this church are hung many votive emblems and tokens of grace received.”

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In the 1586 edition of *Caccia*, a MS. copy of which I have before me, the chapels are given as follows: Adam and Eve, Annunciation, and Santa Casa di Loreto, Visit of Mary to Elizabeth, Magi, Joseph and Mary worshipping the Infant Christ, and the Adoration of Shepherds,<sup>1</sup> Circumcision, Joseph warned to fly, the chapel (but not the figures) of the Massacre of the Innocents, Flight into Egypt, Baptism, Temptation in the Wilderness, Woman of Samaria, the chapel (but not the figures) of the Healing of the Paralytic, and the Raising of the Widow's son at Nain, the Raising of Lazarus, Entry of Christ into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, Agony in the Garden, Capture, Flagellation, Crowning with Thorns, Christ carrying His cross to Calvary (doubtless Tabachetti's chapel), the Fainting of the Virgin, the earlier Journey to Calvary by Gaudenzio (then lately moved into what is now the Pietà chapel), Crucifixion, Pietà, Holy Sepulchre, Appearance to Mary Magdalene.

I have reserved for a later chapter the more detailed explanation of my reasons for thinking that the original Journey to Calvary figures were moved up from the present Temptation to the present Pietà chapel, but will

<sup>1</sup> These chapels are grouped together in the 1586 edition as “la natività di N.S. nel Presepio,” but they are separated, as they doubtless should have been earlier, in the edition of 1590 [1591].

## *History of the Sacro Monte*

recapitulate briefly here. In the plan of 1570 the Journey to Calvary is given as in the present Temptation chapel, but a new chapel with the same subject was contemplated, a site being marked for it near the Crucifixion chapel. There was no other Journey to Calvary chapel. The discontent with the then existing chapel betrayed in the plan of 1570 is stated in the notes to be due to the fact that it stood in false topographical relation to the Crucifixion, and spoiled the historical sequence of the scenes.

In 1586 we find the Temptation on its present site, and, not one only, but two Journeys to Calvary in immediate proximity to the Crucifixion. One of these chapels is doubtless the present work by Tabachetti, and it seems simplest to suppose that the other is one that had been moved up from the Temptation chapel as an experiment before going to the expense of an entirely new work. I imagine that the chapel being found too small and the effect inadequate, Tabachetti's present work was ordered. On the completion of this the older scene was allowed to decay and ultimately was removed, the background (which I suppose copied from the original chapel, and which does not fit its present wall) being retained, incongruous though it was, for the Pietà group.

Some say that the work on the Sacro Monte was almost discontinued between the years 1540 and 1580. I cannot, however, find that this was so, though the chapels of that period are very bad. About the year 1565 the Marchese d'Adda began to interest himself in the matter, and commissioned Tibaldi to make plans for the reconstruction of the scheme. Nevertheless, S. Carlo's visit in 1578 is a convenient landmark from which to date a new departure in the history of the Sacro Monte.

Giussano gives the following account of his first

## *Ex Voto*

visit, which makes us better understand the austere expression that reigns on S. Carlo's face, as we see it represented in his portraits:

“It was two o'clock in the day before St. Charles arrived at this place, and he had not broken his fast, but before taking anything he visited the different chapels for meditation, of which Father Adorno gave him the points. As evening drew on, he withdrew to take his refectio<sup>n</sup> of bread and water, and then returned again to the chapels till after midnight though the weather was very cold” [end of October or beginning of November]. “He then took two hours' rest on a chair, and at five o'clock in the morning resumed his devotions; then, after having said his Mass, he again allowed himself a small portion of bread and water, and continued his journey to Milan, renewed in fervour of spirit, and with a firm determination to begin again to serve God with greater energy than ever.”<sup>1</sup>

Surely one may add “according to his lights” after the words “to serve God.” The second visit of St. Charles to Varallo, a few days before his death, is even more painful reading, and the reader may be referred for an account of it to chapter xi of the second volume of the work last quoted from. He had a cell in the cloister, where he slept on a wooden bed, which is still shown and venerated, and used to spend hours in contemplating the various sacred mysteries, but most especially the Agony in the Garden, near which a little shelter was made for him, and in which he was praying when his impending death was announced to him by an angel. But this chapel, which was near the present Transfiguration chapel, was destroyed and rebuilt on its

<sup>1</sup> English translation of the *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, with preface by Cardinal Manning. Burns & Oates, London and New York, 1884, vol. ii, p. 47.

## *History of the Sacro Monte*

present site after his death, being filled with figures of no great value that are ascribed to Giovanni D'Enrico. It was on the Sacro Monte that S. Carlo discharged his last public functions, after which, feeling that he had taken a chill, he left Varallo on 29th October 1584, and died at Milan six days afterwards.

At the Marchese d'Adda's instance Tibaldi made the plan of the Sacro Monte already referred to, and designed the many chapels mentioned in the 1586 edition of Caccia as about to be built. Prominent among these was the Temple of Solomon, which was to involve "una spesa grandissima," and was to be as like the real temple as it could be made.

The Palazzo di Pilato, which, as the name denotes, is devoted to the sufferings of Christ under Pontius Pilate, was actually carried out, though not till some years after S. Carlo's death, and not according to Tibaldi's design. It is most probable that the designer of the Palazzo di Pilato, and of the Caiaphas and Herod chapels as we now see them, was Giovanni D'Enrico. "It was in 1608," says Bordiga,<sup>1</sup> writing of the Santa Scala, which leads from the Crowning with Thorns to the Ecce Homo chapels, "that this work with its steps, exactly twenty-eight in number, was begun, according to the design obtained from Rome by Francesco Testa, who was then Fabbriciere."

Between this year and 1645 the four Pilate chapels, the Ecce Homo, Caiaphas, Herod, present Pietà, Sleeping Apostles, Agony in the Garden, and Christ Nailed to the Cross chapels were either created or reconstructed. These works bear D'Enrico's name in the guide-books, and he no doubt presided over the work that was done in them; but I should say that by far the greater number of the figures in them are by Giacomo

<sup>1</sup> *Storia e Guida*, ed. 1857, Varallo, p. 68.

## *Ex Voto*

Ferro, his assistant, to whom I will return presently, or by other pupils and assistants. Only one chapel, the Transfiguration, belongs to the second half of the seventeenth century, and one, the Christ before Annas, to the eighteenth (1765); one—the present Entombment—belongs to the nineteenth, and one or two have been destroyed, as has been unfortunately the case with the Chiesa Vecchia, but the plan of the Sacro Monte in 1671, which I here give, will show that it was not much different then from what it is at present. The numbers on the chapels are explained as follows:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Gate.                                   | 27. Christ sent again to Pilate.                                |
| 2. Creation of the world and Adam and Eve. | 28. Flagellation.   |
| 3. Annunciation.                           | 29. Crowning with thorns.                                       |
| 4. Salutation.                             | 30. Christ about to ascend the Santa Scala (not shown on plan). |
| 5. First Vision of St. Joseph.             | 31. Ecce Homo.  |
| 6. Magi.                                   | 32. Pilate washes his hands.                                    |
| 7. Nativity.                               | 33. Christ condemned to death.                                  |
| 8. Circumcision.                           | 34. Christ carrying the Cross.                                  |
| 9. Second Vision of St. Joseph.            | 35. Nailing to the Cross.                                       |
| 10. Flight into Egypt.                     | 36. Passion.  |
| 11. Massacre of the Innocents.             | 37. Deposition from the Cross.                                  |
| 12. Baptism.                               | 38. Pietà.  |
| 13. Temptation.                            | 39. Entombment (not shown on plan).                             |
| 14. Woman of Samaria.                      | 40. Chapel of St. Francis.                                      |
| 15. Healing the Paralytic.                 | 41. Holy Sepulchre.   |
| 16. Widow's son at Nain.                   | 42. Appearance to Mary Magdalene.                               |
| 17. Transfiguration.                       | 43. Infancy of the Virgin.                                      |
| 18. Raising of Lazarus.                    | 44. Sepulchre of the Virgin.                                    |
| 19. Entry into Jerusalem.                  | 45. Sepulchre of St. Anne.                                      |
| 20. Last Supper.                           | 46. Ascended Christ over the fountain.                          |
| 21. Agony in the Garden.                   | 47. Chiesa Vecchia.   |
| 22. Sleeping Apostles.                     | 48. Chiesa Maggiore.  |
| 23. Capture.                               |   |
| 24. Caiaphas, and Penitence of St. Peter.  |   |
| 25. Christ before Pilate.                  |   |
| 26. Christ before Herod.                   |   |





PLAN OF THE SACRO MONTE IN 1671



## *History of the Sacro Monte*

The view is a bird's-eye one, and there is hardly any hill in reality. The most deplorable loss, so far at least as we know, is that of the Chiesa Vecchia, which contained important frescoes by Gaudenzio Ferrari. The fine pine-trees near the fountain in front of the Chiesa Maggiore are also to be regretted, but if Tabachetti could come to life again, beyond finding the figures in the individual chapels looking a little older and a little mangier, he would not be struck with any other very considerable alterations.

I will give here the dates of the various periods during which different materials were used for the figures on the Sacro Monte: Epoch 1, 1490-1503, pre-Gaudenzian; wood. (2) 1503-1540, Gaudenzian; terra-cotta. (3) 1540-1580, stucco (the period of greatest degradation). (4) 1580-1586, Tabachetti, who, however, may have begun to work under the stucco sculptors as an assistant; terra-cotta. (5) 1586-1605, terra-cotta in the Massacre of the Innocents and stucco in the Salutation chapel synchronously, but stucco only thenceforward till the coming of Giovanni D'Enrico, say in 1605. This period begins with the temporary ruin of Tabachetti and the return of the stucco sculptors. With D'Enrico terra-cotta was resumed and not again abandoned.

THE FOREGOING OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY of the work must suffice for the present. I will reserve further remarks for the space which I shall devote to each individual chapel. As regards the particular form the work took, I own that I have been at times inclined to wonder whether Leonardo da Vinci may not have had something to do with it.

Between 1481 and the end of 1499 he was in Milan, and during the later years of this period was the chief authority on all art matters. It is not easy to think that Caimi, who was a Milanese, would not consult him before embarking upon an art enterprise of the first magnitude; and certainly there is something in the idea of turning the full strength of both painting and sculpture at once on to a single subject, which harmonizes well with the magnificent rashness of which we know Leonardo to have been capable, and with the fact that he was both a painter and a sculptor himself. There is, however, not one scrap of evidence in support of this view, which is based solely on the fact that both the scheme and Leonardo were audacious, and that the first is little likely to have been undertaken without counsel from the second. The actual evidence points rather, as already indicated, in the direction of thinking that the frescoes began outside the chapels, got inside them for shelter, and ere long claimed the premises as belonging no less to themselves than to the statues. The idea of treating full-relief sculptured figures with a view to a pictorial rather than sculpturesque effect was in itself, as undertaken when Gaudenzio was too young to have had a voice in the matter, a daring innovation, even without the adjunct of a fresco background; and the idea of taking a mountain as though it were a book, and illustrating it with a number of such groups, was more daring still. To this extent we may perhaps suppose

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Caimi to have been indebted to Leonardo da Vinci: the rest is probably due to Gaudenzio, who evolved it in the course of those unforeseen developments of which design and judgment are never slow to take advantage.

To whomsoever the conception may be due, if it had only been carried out by such artists as Tabachetti, Gaudenzio Ferrari, Paracca commonly called Bargnola, or even Giovanni D'Enrico, works like those at Varallo might not have fallen, as they presently did, into unregretted desuetude. Unfortunately the same thing was attempted at Orta, and later on at Varese, by greatly inferior men. It is true that some of the groups at Varese, especially the one in the Disputa chapel, are excellent, and that there are few chapels even there in which no good figures may be found if they are looked for. Still the prevailing spirit at Varese is stagy; the work belongs to an age when art of all kinds was held to consist mainly in exaggeration, and when freedom from affectation had fallen into a disrepute from which it has taken centuries to emerge—if it has emerged, or if, indeed, in the nature of things it ever can or will emerge. The art of Varese is, indeed, greatly above the average of that at Orta; but unfortunately it is by Orta that English people for the most part judge the attempt to combine sculpture and painting. Curiously enough, however, it is at Orta, after all, that the best idea can be formed of whether the attempt to combine sculpture and painting can succeed or not; for at Orta many of the frescoes are in excellent preservation, which at Varallo they rarely are. At Orta the figures and frescoes often do melt into one another in such a way that it is not immediately evident where the first begin and the others end.

Some chapels even at Varallo are bad, but assuredly not most of them. One—I mean, of course, Tabachetti's

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Journey to Calvary, which contains about forty figures the full size of life, and nine horses,—is of such superlative excellence as regards composition and dramatic power, to say nothing of the many admirable individual figures comprised in it, that it is not too much to call it the most astounding work that has ever been achieved in sculpture. I know that this is strong language, but have considered my words as much as I care to do. As Michael Angelo's Medicean chapel errs on the side of over-subtlety, refinement, and the exaggerated idealism from which indeed there is but one step to the *barocco*, so does Tabachetti's on that of over-downrightness, or, as a critic with a cultivated eye might say, with perhaps a show of reason at a first glance, even of vulgarity. Nevertheless, if I could have my choice whether to have created Michael Angelo's chapel or Tabachetti's, I should not for a moment hesitate about choosing Tabachetti's, though it drove its unhappy creator mad, which the Medicean chapel never did by Michael Angelo. Other chapels by Tabachetti are also admirable works. Two chapels contain very extensive frescoes by Gaudenzio Ferrari, than which it is safe to say that, wrecks though they in great measure are, few, if any, finer works of their kind have been preserved to us—unless they are by Gaudenzio himself. The statues by Gaudenzio in the same chapels are all interesting, and some remarkably good. Their arrangement in the Crucifixion chapel, if not marked by the superlative dramatic power of Tabachetti, is still solemn, dignified, and impressive. The frescoes by Morazzone in Tabachetti's great chapel belong to the decline of art, but there is still much in them that is excellent. Of Tanzio and Melchiorre, Giovanni D'Enrico's brothers, I cannot speak so favourably. Giovanni D'Enrico's Nailing of Christ to the Cross, with its sixty figures all of them full

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life-size, challenges a comparison with Tabachetti, which it will not bear; still it is a great work. So are several of his other chapels. I am not so thoroughly in sympathy with the work of any of the three brothers D'Enrico as I should like to be, but they cannot be ignored or spoken of without respect. There are excellent figures in some of the chapels by less well-known men; and lastly, there is the Vecchietto, perhaps the finest figure of all, who looks as if he had dropped straight from the heavens towards which he is steadfastly regarding, and of whom nothing is known except that, if not by Tabachetti, he must be by a genius in some respects even more commanding, who has left us nothing save this Melchizedek of a figure, without father, mother, or descent.

I have glanced at some of the wealth in store for those who will explore it, but at the same time I cannot pretend that even the greater number of the chapels on the Sacro Monte are above criticism; and unfortunately some of the best do not come till the visitor, if he takes them in the prescribed order, has already seen a good many, and is beginning to be tired. There is not a little to be said in favour of taking them in the reverse order. As when one has sampled several figures in a chapel and found them commonplace, one is apt to overlook a good one which may have got in by accident of shifting in some one of the several rearrangements made in the course of more than three centuries, so when sampling the chapels themselves, after finding three or four running which are of inferior merit, we approach the others with a bias against them. Moreover, all of them have suffered more or less severely from decay. Rain and snow, indeed, can hardly get right inside the chapels, or, at any rate, not inside most of them, but they are all open to the air, and, at a height of over two

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thousand feet, ages of winter damp have dimmed the glory even of the best preserved. In many cases the hair and beards, with excess of realism, were made of horse hair glued on, and the glue now shows unpleasantly; while the paint on many of the faces and dresses has blistered or peeled, leaving the figures with a diseased and mangy look. In other cases, they have been scraped and repainted, and this process has probably been repeated many times over, with inevitable loss of character; for the paint, unless very carefully removed, must soon clog up and conceal delicate modelling in many parts of the face and hands. The new paint has often been of a shiny, oleaginous character, and this will go far to vulgarize even a finely modelled figure, giving it something of the look of a Highlander outside a tobacconist's shop. I am glad to see that Professor Burlazzi, in repainting the Adam and Eve in the first chapel, has used dead colour, as was done by Tabachetti in his Journey to Calvary. As the figures have often become mangy, so the frescoes are with few exceptions injured by damp and mould. The expense of keeping up so many chapels must be very heavy; it is surprising, therefore, that the general state of repair should be as good as it is. Nevertheless, there is not a chapel which does not require some effort of the imagination before the mind's eye can see it as it was when left by those who made it.

Take the Venus of Milo; let her be done in terracotta and have run, not much, but still something, in the baking: paint her pink, two oils, all over, and varnish her—it will help to preserve the paint; glue a lot of horsehair on to her pate, half of which has come off, leaving the glue still showing; scrape her, not too thoroughly; get the village drawing-master to paint her again, and the drawing-master in the next provincial



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town to put a forest background behind her with the brightest emerald green leaves that he can do for the money; let this painting and scraping and repainting be repeated several times over; festoon her with pink and white flowers made of tissue-paper; surround her with the cheapest German imitations of the cheapest decorations that Birmingham can produce; let the night air and winter fogs get at her for three hundred years; and how easy I wonder will it be to see the battered outraged goddess who will still be in great part there?

Unless the reader feels equal to the effort of mental restoration—and enough remains to make it a very possible one—he had better stick to the Royal Academy and Grosvenor Exhibitions. It should go without saying that a work of art, if considered at all, must be held to be as it was when first completed. If we could see Gaudenzio Ferrari's Crucifixion chapel with its marvellous frescoes as strong and fresh in colour as they were three centuries and a half ago, and with its nearly thirty life-sized human figures and horses in good condition—not forgetting that, whatever Sir Henry Layard may say to the contrary, both frescoes and sculptured figures are by one hand; if, again, Tabachetti's great work was seen by us as it was seen by Tabachetti, and Morazzone's really fine background were not disfigured by damp and mildew, it can hardly be doubted that even "a cultivated eye" would find little difficulty in seeing these two chapels as among the very finest triumphs that have been vouchsafed to human genius; and surely, if this be so, it follows that we should rate them no lower even now. Gaudenzio Ferrari's Crucifixion chapel, regarded as a single work, conceived and executed by a single artist, who aimed with one intention at the highest points ever attained both by painting

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and sculpture, and who wielded on a very large scale, in connection with what was then held to be the sublimest and most solemn of conceivable subjects, the fullest range of all the resources available by either, must stand as perhaps the most daringly ambitious attempt that has been made in the history of art. As regards the frescoes, the success was as signal as the daring; and even as regards the sculpture, the work cannot be said to have failed. Gaudenzio the sculptor will not indeed compare with Gaudenzio the painter; still less will he compare with Tabachetti either as a modeller or composer of full-relief figures; but Tabachetti did not paint his own background as well as make his figures, and something must always be allowed to those who are carrying double. Moreover, Tabachetti followed, whereas Gaudenzio led as pioneer in a realm of art never hitherto attempted. Nevertheless, I may be allowed to say that, notwithstanding all Gaudenzio's greatness, I find Tabachetti the strongest and most robust of all the great men who have left their mark on the Sacro Monte at Varallo.

We cannot dismiss such works with cheap commonplaces about Madame Tussaud's—and for aught I know there may be some very good stuff at Madame Tussaud's—or sneer at them as though they must be all much of a muchness, and because much of the work at Orta is bad, therefore all that at Varallo must be so also. Those who confine themselves to retailing what they take to be art-tips gathered from our leading journals of culture, will probably continue to trade on this not very hardy earned capital, whatever may be urged upon the other side; but those who will take the trouble involved in forming an independent judgment may be encouraged to make investment of their effort here by remembering that Gaudenzio Ferrari ranks as among

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the few purest and most accomplished artists of the very culminating period of Italian art, and that what he thought good enough to do may be well worth our while to consider with the best attention we can give to it.

Another point should not be forgotten by those who would form their opinion intelligently. I mean, that they are approaching a class of work with which they are unfamiliar, and must not, therefore, expect to be able to make up their minds about it as they might if the question were one either of painting or sculpture only. Sculpture and painting are here integral parts of a single design, and it is some little time before we grasp this conception so fully as to be able to balance duly the merits and demerits of different compositions, even though we eventually get to see that there is an immeasurable distance between the best and worst. I now know, for example, that Tabachetti's Journey to Calvary is greatly finer than Giovanni D'Enrico's Nailing to the Cross. I see this so clearly that I find it difficult to conceive how I can have doubted about it. At the same time, I can remember thinking that one was nearly as good as the other, and this long after I should have found little difficulty in making up my mind about less complex works.

THE DIFFICULTY REFERRED TO AT THE close of the last chapter is the same as that which those who rarely go to a theatre have to get over before they can appreciate an actor. They go to *Macbeth* or *Othello*, expecting to find players speaking and acting on the stage much as they would in actual life; and not finding this, are apt to think the acting coarse and unnatural. They forget that the physical conditions of the stage involve compliance with conventions from which there is no escape, and expect the players to play a game which the players themselves know to be impossible, and are not even trying to play. So important is it to understand the standpoint from which the artists at Varallo worked, that I shall venture some further remarks upon their aim and scope before going on to the works themselves.

Their object, or the object of those who commissioned them, was to bring the scene with which they were engaged home to the spectator in all its fulness, short of actual life and motion; but in this "short of actual life and motion" what a cutting-out of the part of Hamlet is there not involved. We can spare a good deal of Hamlet; but if the part is totally excised,—even though the Hamlet be Mr. Irving himself,—the play must suffer. To try to represent action without the immediate changes of position and expression which are its most essential features, seems like courting defeat, and to a certain extent defeat does invariably follow the attempt to treat very violent rapid action except loosely and sketchily. Violent action carried to high degree of finish is hardly ever successful in painting or sculpture; a crowd done in Michael Angelo's Medici chapel manner must inevitably fail, and if a crowd is to be treated in sculpture at all, Tabachetti's broad, large-brushed, and somewhat sketchy treatment is the one

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most to be preferred. In spite, however, of the incomparable success of Tabachetti's work, I am tempted to question whether quiet and reposeful sculpture is not always most permanently pleasing, as not involving so peremptory a demand for the change that cannot, of course, ensue. At any rate, as one lie generally leads to others, so with the attempt to render action without action's most essential characteristic, there is a departure from realism which involves a host of other departures if the error is to be distributed so as to avoid offence. In other words, convention, or a composition between artist and spectator, whereby, in view of admitted bankruptcy and failure of possible payment in full, a less thing shall be taken as a greater, has superseded nature at a very early point in the proceedings.

Nevertheless, within the limits of the composition we expect to be paid in full; whatever the dividend is we are to have all of it, and we sometimes take a different view of the terms of the settlement to that taken by those with whom we are dealing. It being admitted that the object of the Sacro Monte workmen was to bring a scene home to the spectator in all possible fulness, we expect to have a quatum of our own ideas of the scene, whatever they may be, put before us, and are more or less offended when we find a composition which we consider to be unreal even within its own covenanted limitations. The fault, however, rests greatly with ourselves, in forgetting that it must be the ideal of mediaeval Italians and not our own that we should look for, and that their ideas concerning the chief actors in the sacred dramas were not as ours are. For us, the οἱοὶ νῦν βροτοὶ εἰς view of history has been gathered to its fathers, and οἱοὶ δὴ βροτοὶ ἦσαν is reigning in its stead. We believe that we have advanced upon, not degenerated from our ancestors,

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except here and there as by way of back eddy, but Italians in the Middle Ages may be excused for having been overawed by the remains of the old splendour which met them everywhere; and even if this had not been so, to children and half-educated people that which happened long ago is always grander and larger than any like thing that happened recently. As regards the sacred dramas this grandioseness of conception extended even to the villains of the piece, who must be greater, more muscular, thorough-going, unredeemed villains than any now existing. The realism which would have proved so touching and grateful now—for we should have found it turned into idealism through the impress of that seal which it is time's glory to set upon aged things—would in the Middle Ages have seemed as unworthy, and as much below the dignity of the subject as modern treatment of the same subjects, with modern costumes, would seem to ourselves.

Ages thwart and play at cross purposes with one another, as parents do with children; and our forefathers have been at infinite trouble and expense to give us what we do not want, and have withheld what they might have given with very little trouble, and we should have held as priceless. We cannot help it; it always has been and always will be so. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico* is a condition of existence or at any rate of progress, and the unknown of the past takes a splendour reflected from that of the future. The artists and public of the sixteenth century could no more find what they deemed a worthy ideal in their own familiar, and as it seemed to them prosaic age than we in ours, and every age must make its art work to its own liking and not to that of other people. Caimi was thinking mainly of his own generation; he could not wait a couple of hundred years or so till the work should become touch-

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ing and quaint through age; he wanted it to be effective then and there, which if the Apostles were shown as mere common peasants and fishermen of the then present day, it would not and could not be—not at any rate with the pit, and it was to the pit as well as to the boxes that these pieces were being played. Let the ablest sculptors of the present time be asked to treat sacred subjects as was attempted at Varallo, with the condition that they must keep closely to the costume of to-day, and they would probably one and all of them decline the task. We know very well that, laugh at it as we may, our costume will three hundred years hence be as interesting as that of any other age, but that is not to the point: it has got to be effective now, whereas our familiarity with it has bred contempt.

In the earlier ages both of painting and sculpture these considerations, obvious as they are, were not taken into account. The first artists during the mediæval revival of art rose as little to theory as children do. They found the mere doing at all so difficult that they were at the mercy in great measure of what they could get. The real was as much as, and more than, they could manage, and they would have idealized long before they did, if they had not felt the task too much for them. They could, with infinite trouble, they hardly knew how, save themselves yet so as by fire and get a head or figure of some sort that was not quite unlike what it was meant for, but they could only do this by helping their unpractised memories to the facts morsel by morsel, treating nature as though she were a stuffed set piece, getting her to sit as still for as long a time as she could be persuaded to do, and then going all over her touch for touch with a brush like the point of a pin. If the early masters had been able to do all they would have liked to have done, no doubt they

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would most of them have been as vulgar as we are; fortunately their incompetence stood them in good stead and saved them from becoming the Guidos, Domenichinos, and Guercinos that so many of their more competent successors took so much trouble to become. Incompetence, if amiable and painstaking, will have with it an unconscious involuntary idealism of its own which is perhaps more charming than any that can be attained by aiming at it deliberately; at any rate it will take the thing portrayed apart from the everyday familiar routine of life which is the great enemy of fancy and the ideal; but the artists of the Sacro Monte had got far beyond the point at which incompetence could be of much use to them, and had to find some other means whereby to steer clear of the everyday life which to the public for whom they had to play, would have appeared so vulgar, and to us so infinitely more delightful than much that they have actually left us. These means they could only find in much the same quarters as dramatic writers and players find them on the stage, and to a certain extent no doubt the Varallo chapels, like all other attempts to place a scene upon a stage, must submit to the charge of being more or less stagy, but—more especially considering that they are seen by daylight—it is surprising how little stagy they are.

Also, like all other attempts to place a scene upon the stage, they will be found to consist of a few stars, several players of secondary importance, and a certain number of supers. It is a mistake to attempt, as I am told is attempted at the Comédie Française, to have all the actors of first-class merit. They kill one another even in a picture, and on the whole in any work of art it is better to concentrate the main interest on a sufficient number of the most important figures, and to let



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the setting off of these be the chief business of the remainder. Gaudenzio Ferrari hardly understood this at all, and has no figures which can be considered as mere stage accessories. Tabachetti understood it, but could hardly bring himself down to the level of his supers. D'Enrico understood it perhaps a shade too well; he was a man of business, and turned his supers over to Giacomo Ferro, who might be trusted to keep them sufficiently commonplace to show his own work to advantage. It must be owned, however, that the greater number of D'Enrico's chapels would be better if there had been a little more D'Enrico in them and less Giacomo Ferro, and if the D'Enrico had been always taking pains.

We, of course, should have preferred the figures in the Varallo chapels to be all of them as realistic as the artist could make them, provided he chose good types, as a good man may be very well trusted to do. Whenever we get a bit of realism as in the Eve, and Sleeping St. Joseph of Tabachetti, in the Herod, Laughing Boys, and Caiaphas of D'Enrico (if, indeed, these figures are really his), and still more in the Vecchietto, or in three or four of the figures in the St. Eusebius chapel at Crea, we accept it with avidity, and we may be sure that the masters who gave us the figures above-named could have given us any number equally realistic if they had been inclined to do so. Tabachetti's instinct was certainly towards realism as far as he dared, but even he is not in most cases realistic—not, I mean, in the sense of making his personages actual life-like portraits. That he was not more so than he is is probably due to some of the considerations on which I have above imperfectly dwelt, and to others that have escaped myself, but were patent enough to him.

One other practical consideration would make against

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realism in such works as those at Varallo, I mean the fact that if the figures were to be portraits of the Varallo celebrities of the time, the whole place would have been set by the ears in the competition as to who was to be represented and with what precedence. It was only by passing a kind of self-denying ordinance and forbidding portraiture at all that the work could be carried out. Here and there, as in the case of Tabachetti's portrait of the Countess Solomoni of Serravalle, who was a benefactress, or of the Vecchietto—which, however, was not designed for its present place, and which is no doubt a portrait of Tabachetti himself<sup>1</sup>—an exception was made; we can detect similar exceptions in the portraits of Leonardo da Vinci, Stefano Scotto, Giovanni D'Enrico, and the earlier portrait of Tabachetti, to which attention will be called presently; artists indeed have generally been lenient towards exceptions in their own favour, but in most cases it seems to have been understood that whatever else the figures were to be, they must not be portraits—not, at any rate, of local celebrities.

<sup>1</sup> [See p. xxi.]

**B**EFORE GOING THROUGH THE VARIOUS chapels *seriatim*, it may be well to give a short account of three out of the four most interesting figures among the numerous artists who worked on the Sacro Monte. By these I mean, of course, Gaudenzio Ferrari, Tabachetti, Giovanni D'Enrico, and the sculptor, whoever he may have been, of the Massacre of the Innocents chapel. I take my account of Gaudenzio chiefly from Colombo's admirable work, and from the not less excellent notice by Signor Tonetti that appeared in the *Museo Storico ed Artistico Valsesiano* for July and August 1885.

Gaudenzio Ferrari was born, according to the general belief, in 1484, but Colombo shows reason for thinking that this date is some four or five years too late. His father was named Antonio Lanfranco or Franchino.<sup>1</sup> He too was a painter, but nothing is known of him or his works beyond the fact that he lived at Valduggia, where his son Gaudenzio is said to have been born, married a woman whose surname was Vinzio, and was dead by 1510. Gaudenzio in his early years several times signed his pictures with his mother's name, calling himself Vincius, De Vincio, or De Vince.

Since the first edition of this book was published, Signor G. Arienta has written a paper to show reason for thinking that though Gaudenzio's father came from Valduggia, Gaudenzio himself was born at Varallo. He bases this opinion upon the fact that the painter,

<sup>1</sup> In the register of the houses in Varallo, taken in 1536, his house is thus described: "Magister Gaudentius pictor fqm Magistri Franchini Vallis Ugie habitator Varalli, habet sedimen unum cum domo una magna plodata et alia contigua peleis, et curte ante, et curteto ad plateam putei, cui cohoeret Franciscus Draghettus sive de Boglia et strata, et soror Catarina de Pioleto" (see Signor Tonetti's Memoir).

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while frequently calling himself a Varallese or a Vallesian, never calls himself a Valduggian, and partly on the silence of Bishop Bescapè, who, while mentioning two other notables as born at Valduggia, does not name Gaudenzio. Bishop Bescapè was a careful historian, and when travelling in his diocese used to gather *viva voce* and on the spot materials for his work. He did not live much after Gaudenzio's time, and his silence is certainly suggestive.

He is generally said to have studied first under Gerolamo Giovenone of Vercelli, but this painter was not born till 1491, and we have the authority of Lomazzo for saying that Gaudenzio's chief instructor was Stefano Scotto, a painter of Milan, who kept a school that was more or less a rival to that of Leonardo da Vinci. I have myself no doubt that Gaudenzio Ferrari has given Scotto's portrait in at least four of the works he has left behind him at Varallo, but will return to this subject when I come to deal with the various places in which these portraits appear. His first works of importance, or at least the earliest that remain to us, are probably in or in the immediate vicinity of Varallo; but little is known of his early years and work, beyond what is comprised in the three pages that form the second chapter of Colombo's book. There is an early *ancona* at La Rocca, near Varallo, another in the *parocchia* of Gattinara, and possibly a greatly damaged Pietà in the cloisters of S. Maria delle Grazie at Varallo may be, as it is said to be, an early work by Gaudenzio. Besides these, the design of the frescoes in the Pietà chapel on the Sacro Monte, and other works on the same site, now lost, belong to his earlier years.

Some believe that about the year 1506 he travelled to Perugia, Florence, and Rome, where he made the acquaintance of Raphael, and perhaps studied under

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Perugino, but Colombo has shown on what very slender, if any, grounds this belief is based, and evidently inclines to the belief that Gaudenzio never went to Rome, nor indeed, probably, outside Lombardy at all. The only one of Gaudenzio's works in which I can myself see anything that may perhaps be called a trace of Umbrian influence, is in the fresco of Christ disputing with the Doctors, in the chapel of S. Margherita, in the church of S. Maria delle Grazie at Varallo. This fresco, as Signor Arienta has pointed out to me, contains a strong reminiscence of the architectural background in Raphael's school of Athens; it was painted—so far as an illegible hieroglyphic signature can be taken as read, and so far as internal evidence of style may be relied upon, somewhere about the year 1507. If Gaudenzio was for the moment influenced by Raphael, he soon shook off the influence and formed a style of his own, from which he did not depart, except as enriching and enlarging his manner with advancing experience. Moreover, Colombo (p. 75) points out that the works by Raphael to which Gaudenzio's *Disputa* is supposed to present an analogy, were not finished till 1511, and are hence probably later than Gaudenzio's fresco. Perhaps both painters drew from some common source.

In 1508 he was at Vercelli, and on 26th July signed a contract to paint a picture for the church of S. Anna. He is described in the deed as "Gaudentius de Varali." He had by this time married his first wife, by whom he had two children, Gerolamo and Margherita, born in 1508 and 1512. In 1510 he undertook to paint an altar-piece for the main church at Arona, and completed it in 1511, signing the work "Magister Gaudentius de Vince, filius quondam magistri Lanfranchi habitator vallis Siccidæ." In 1513 he painted the magnificent

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and admirably preserved series of frescoes in the church of S. Maria delle Grazie at Varallo, signing the work and dating it, this time more legibly than he had done his earlier work in the chapel of St. Margaret. This work and the Disputa fresco just referred to are probably more entirely Gaudenzio's own work, unassisted by pupils, than any others of his Varallo frescoes. In July 1514 he signed a contract to paint an altar-piece for the Basilica of S. Gaudenzio at Novara. It was to be completed within eighteen months from the date of the contract and doubtless was so, but Gaudenzio found a good deal of difficulty in getting his money, which was not paid in full till 1521. He is occasionally met with at Novara and Vercelli between the years 1515 and 1524, but his main place of abode was Varallo.

No date can be positively assigned for his great Crucifixion chapel on the Sacro Monte, but it belongs probably to some years between 1520 and 1528. I have already said that I know of no dates scrawled on the walls earlier than 1523. Such dates may be found yet, but if they are not found, it may be assumed that the chapel was not begun much before 1520, for the single date 1523 may have been very well done while the work was in progress. There is still a little *relievo* employed in the fresco background, but not nearly so much as in the church of S. Maria delle Grazie, and the increase of freedom is so evident that it is difficult not to suppose an interval of a good many years between the two works. I gather that by the year 1520 Gaudenzio had abandoned the use of gold and of *relievo* in painting, but he may have made an exception in the case of a work which was to consist both of sculpture and painting; and there is indeed a good deal to be said in favour of *relievo* in such a case, as helping to unite the sculptured and painted portions of the work. Even in the Magi chapel,

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the frescoes of which are several years later than those in the Crucifixion chapel, there are still a few bosses of *relievo* in the horses' trappings. The date usually assigned to the Crucifixion chapel is 1524, and, in default of more precise knowledge, we shall do well to adhere to the date already suggested.

About 1524 Gaudenzio painted a picture for the Sacristy of the Cathedral of Novara, and Signor Tonetti says that the very beautiful picture behind the high altar in the church of S. Gaudenzio at Varallo is generally assigned to about the same period. He goes on to say that in 1526 Gaudenzio was certainly working at his native village of Valduggia, where, in 1524 or 1525, a chapel had been erected in honour of S. Rocco, who it was supposed had kept the Valsesia free from the plague that had devastated other parts of Italy. This chapel Gaudenzio decorated with frescoes that have now disappeared, but whose former existence is recorded in an inscription placed in 1793, when the chapel was restored. The inscription runs: "Quod populus à peste defensori erigebat an MDXXVI Gaudentius Ferrarius patritius ex voto pictura decorabat," etc.

In 1528 he transferred his abode to Vercelli, and about the same year married again. His second wife was a widow who had a boy of ten years old by Giovanni Antonio del Olmo, of Bergamo. Her name was Maria Mattia della Foppa; she came from Morbegno in the Valtellina, and was of the same family as Vincenzo Foppa, the reputed founder of the Milanese school of painting. In 1532 he married his daughter Margherita to Domenico Pertegalle, surnamed Festa, of Crevola near Varallo—he and his son Gerolamo undertaking to give her a dowry of 500 *lire imperiali*, payable in four years, and secured by mortgage on Gaudenzio's house in Varallo.

## *Ex Voto*

In 1536 he painted the cupola of the church of the Madonna dei Miracoli at Saronno; he then returned to Vercelli, but his abode and movements are somewhat obscure till 1539, when it is certain that he left Varallo for ever, settled in Milan, and died there between the years 1546 and 1549. He does not appear to have continued to reside in Vercelli after 1536; we may perhaps, therefore, think that he returned for a time to Varallo, and that the frescoes on the Magi chapel should be given to some date between 1536 and 1539. They are certainly several years later than those in the Crucifixion chapel; but I will return to these frescoes when I come to the Magi chapel itself.

In 1539 he lost his son Gerolamo, and Colombo ascribes his departure from Varallo to grief; but we cannot forget that in the year 1538 there broke out a violent quarrel between the ecclesiastics of the Sacro Monte and the lay governors of Varallo. Fassola says that in 1530 Gio. Ant. Scarrognini, grandson of Milano Scarrognini, and some time afterwards Gio. Angiolo Draghetti, were made Fabbricieri. The election of this last was opposed by the ecclesiastics, who wished to see certain persons elected who were already proctors of the convent, but the Vicini held out, and carried the day. Party feeling ran so high, and the Fathers wished to have such absolute control over the keys of the various money boxes attached to the chapels, and over all other matters, that it may well have been difficult for Gaudenzio to avoid coming into collision with one or both of these contending parties; matters came to a head in the year 1538, and his leaving Varallo for ever about this time may, perhaps, be referred to his finding himself in an intolerable position, as well as to the death of his son; but, however this may be, he sold his house on 5th August 1539 for seven hundred *lire imperiali*, and



## Gaudenzio Ferrari

for the rest of his life resided in Milan, where he executed several important works, for which I must refer my readers to the pages of Colombo.

Colombo, to whose fine instinct I have already so frequently referred, conjectured in the absence of direct evidence that Gaudenzio died some time during the year 1546. As these pages leave my hands my attention is called to a note in the *Museo Storico ed Artistico Vallesiano*, edited by Signor F. Tonetti of Varallo,<sup>1</sup> from which I find that since Colombo's death the entry of Gaudenzio's demise has been discovered by Signor Emilio Motta in the mortuary registers of the city of Milan, and proves Colombo to have been right. The entry is for 31st January 1546, and runs:

“Dominus Magister Gaudentius de Ferrarij's annorum circa 75 catarro suffocatus in prima, sine signo pestis decessit iuditio Magistri Alexandri Granati.”

It also appears that he died in his own house at Porta Romana, in the parish of S. Nazzaro at Milan.

If Gaudenzio was about seventy-five he must have been born about 1471, or ten years earlier than even Colombo, who was always trying to shift the date of his birth to an earlier year than the one generally received, had ventured to assign to it. On the whole the evidence of a contemporary registry of death will be the safest to adhere to, and we shall do well to suppose that Gaudenzio was born some time between 1470 and 1475, and died 31st January 1546.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Serie IV, No. 1. Varallo, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> I may mention here that the date of Pellegrino Tibaldi's death—architect of the Escorial, of the west front of the duomo at Milan, and already referred to as having made designs for a reconstruction of the Sacro Monte at Varallo—has been also at last settled by reference to the mortuary registers at Milan, and proves to have taken place at Milan on 27th May 1596.

## Ex Voto

The foregoing meagre notice is all that my space allows me to give concerning the life of this great master. I will conclude it with a quotation from Signor Morelli which I take from Sir Henry Layard's recent edition of Kugler's *Hand-book of Painting* (vol. ii, p. 424). Signor Morelli is quoted as saying:

"Gaudenzio Ferrari is inferior to very few of his contemporaries, and occasionally, as in some of those groups of men and women in the great Crucifixion at Varallo, he might challenge comparison with Raphael himself."

It would be a bad business for Raphael if he did. Gaudenzio Ferrari was what Raphael is commonly believed to have been. I do not mean, that he was the prince of painters—such expressions are always hyperbolic; there has been no prince of painters; I mean that Gaudenzio Ferrari's feeling was profound, whereas Raphael's was at best only skin deep. Nevertheless Signor Morelli is impressed with Ferrari's greatness, and places him, "for all in all, as regards inventive genius, dramatic life, and picturesqueness . . . far above Luini." Bernardino Luini must stand so very high that no one can be placed far above him; nevertheless, it is hard not to think that Gaudenzio Ferrari was upon the whole the stronger man.

GREAT AND FASCINATING AS GAUDENZIO was, I have already said that I find Tabachetti a still more interesting figure. He had all Gaudenzio's love of beauty, coupled with a robustness, and freedom from mannerism and self-repetition, that are not always observable in Gaudenzio's work. If Gaudenzio has never received anything approaching to his due meed of praise, Tabachetti may be almost said never to have been praised at all. In Varallo, indeed, and its neighbourhood he is justly regarded as a giant, but the art world generally knows not so much as his name. Cicognara, Lübke, and Perkins know not of his existence, nor of that of Varallo itself, nor of any Valsesian school of sculpture. I have shown that so admirable a writer as Mr. King never even alludes to him, while the most recent authority of any reputed eminence on Italian art thinks that the Titan of terra-cotta was a painter and a pupil of Gaudenzio Ferrari.

Zani, indeed, in his *Enciclopedia Metodica*,<sup>1</sup> and Nagler in his *Künstler Lexicon*,<sup>2</sup> to which works my attention was directed by Mr. Donoghue of the British Museum, both mention Tabachetti. The first calls him "bravissimo," but makes him a Novarese, and calls him "Scultore, plasticatore, Pittore," and "Incisore di stampe à bulino." The second says that Bartoli (*Opp. mor.*, I, 2) calls him a Flemish sculptor; that he made forty small chapels and several hermitages at Crea in the Monferrato district; and that he also worked much at Varallo. I have in vain tried to find the passage in Bartoli to which Nagler refers, and should be much obliged to any one who is more fortunate if he will give me a fuller reference. The *Opp. mor.* referred to appears to be a translation of the *Opuscoli morali*

<sup>1</sup> Parma, 1823.

<sup>2</sup> Munich, 1841.

## *Ex Voto*

of L. B. Alberti, published at Venice in 1568, which is too early for Tabachetti. I have had Bartoli's translation before me, but could discover nothing. Nagler's words run:

“Tabachetti, Johann Baptist, nennt Bartoli (*Opp. mor.*, I, 2), einen niederländischen Bildhauer, ohne seine Lebenszeit zu bestimmen. In der Kirche U.L.F. zu Creto [*sic*] (Montferrat) stellte er in vierzig kleinen Capellen die Geschichte der heil. Jungfrau, des Heilandes und einiger Einsidler dar. Auch in Varallo arbeitete er vieles.”

Before the first edition of this work was published the researches of Cav. Alessandro Godio, the substance of which will be found on p. 100, had shown that Tabachetti was born at Dinant in Belgium, and that his father's name was Guillaume, but no one had followed up the clue thus given, and I was unable to go to Dinant myself before *Ex Voto* was published. Since then I have been to Dinant, and was rewarded by finding out several details about the sculptor and his family, by the help of which I have also been able to find what I do not doubt is a portrait of himself, done by his own hand. I believe that the Vecchietto given as the frontispiece to this book is also a portrait of Tabachetti, of some thirty years later date than the earlier one, but must leave this point for the further consideration of experts, — who, however, so far as I have yet consulted them, generally agree with me.<sup>1</sup>

At Dinant I found Tabachetti's name and work unknown. There was no name in the list of older residents in the least like his, but when I showed the evidence that the sculptor came from Dinant to M. Remacle, the Secrétaire Communal, he promised to look

<sup>1</sup> Butler afterwards abandoned this theory. See pp. xix, xxi of the present volume. — A.T.B.

## *Tabachetti*

into the question, saying that he should probably find the name I was in search of to be a sobriquet of some branch of the De Wespın family. This proved to be the case. The De Wespíns were the leading family at Dinant in the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries; they were many of them copper-beaters by profession, and this trained them to be sculptors at the same time; for the copper-beaters of Dinant not only did repoussé work, but made full relief figures in beaten copper, some few of which still exist, though not at Dinant, and made their own models. By the beginning of the sixteenth century the De Wespíns had become so numerous that several of their branches were distinguished by other names which gradually supplanted the true one. Some, it seems, become Grossir, others Bovy; and by and by it was found that one branch had been called Tabaguet.

Next day M. Remacle gave me a list of several folios in the *Registre aux transports de la haute cour de Dinant*, now at Namur, on which I should find deeds referring to this branch. I felt as if I were bringing Tabachetti home to his own people after an absence of three hundred years, and need hardly say that I hastened to Namur, where I presently found a deed referring to the "Guglielmus Tabachetus de Dinante," mentioned in Cav. Aless. Godio's conveyance, with particulars also referring to his son Jean the sculptor. Of this deed M. Lahaye, the archivist at Namur, was good enough to make me a précis which runs as follows:

"L'an 1587, au mois de Décembre, le quatrième jour, Guillaume de Bossière mari de Catharine de Wespın, dite Tabaguet en qualité d'oncle, de gardien et de tuteur datif de Jean de Wespın, dit Tabaguet expatrié neveux de la susdite Catharine, relève tout ce qui est échu à Jean de Wespın par les décès de ces père et mère

## *Ex Voto*

et par le décès de sa sœur Jacqueline, morte mineure d'âge, et notamment la maison, porpaise, avec ses appendices et appartenances qui fut à feu Guillaume de Wespın, alias Tabaguet et Jacqueline le Febvre, ces defunts père et mère, où presentement demeure Claude de St. Hubert, situé en la rue de Barbizaine en cette ville de Dinant."—*Archives de l'état à Namur, Registre aux transports de la haute cour de Dinant, 1585-1588, folio 344.*

From this document as well as from the conveyance found at Vercelli by Cav. Aless. Godio, it appears that the sculptor's name was plain Jean, and not Jean Baptiste, as with all the Italian writers and with Nagler. From another document I gathered that his grandfather, Perpète de Wespın, had been the first to take the name of Tabaguet, perhaps because he was the first to smoke or sell tobacco at Dinant. Perpète de Wespın married Catharine Nonnon, and by her had issue, Guillaume, father of the sculptor, and two daughters, Madeleine and Catharine. In another document I found Guillaume de Wespın described as "marchand" and "bourgeoy de cette ville de Dinant."

Since I left Namur, M. Lahaye has found that Guillaume de Wespın had three other children besides Jacqueline and Jean. These three were Guillaume, who lived till 1647, Nicolas, and Catharine. In 1598<sup>1</sup> Guillaume bought the shares of Nicolas and Catharine in the house in the Rue Barbizaine, and thus became its owner in respect of three shares out of four. At the same time he bought the two fourth shares owned by Nicolas and Catharine in a quarry in which they also had an interest under their father's will. This quarry is described in the deed as adjacent "à la Carrière l'Italian,"

<sup>1</sup> *Registre aux transports de la haute cour de Dinant, 1597-1600, folios 196, 197.*

## Tabachetti

and M. Lahaye suggests that this may have some reference to Jean, who was then in Italy. At any rate it is certain that in 1599 Jean had not parted with his inheritance, for in a deed dated 14th May of that year<sup>1</sup> we find Guillaume de Wespın described as owning three-fourths of this, and as representing "Jean son frère, présentement absent et expatrié, auquel l'autre quatrième partie dudit heritage appartient." In 1601,<sup>2</sup> later than which date M. Lahaye has not found anything about the sculptor, Guillaume again represents "Jean son frère présentement absent et expatrié."

I may say in passing that the Nicolas mentioned in the deed of 1598 cited above stuck to the name of De Wespın only—neither he nor his children being ever described as "dit Tabaguet."

It is not known when Tabachetti—for so I suppose we had better continue to call him—came to Varallo, but there can be no doubt that by 1586 his great Journey to Calvary chapel was complete except as regards the fresco background. I imagine that it had been only just completed, for it is mentioned in the 1586 edition of Caccia, and in the 1590 edition the abbreviated word "bellissi" has been added as though it had been an oversight to take no notice of the remarkable excellence of the work, or as though that excellence had not as yet been fully apparent. There can be no doubt, however, that Bordiga and the other authorities are wrong in ascribing the chapel to the year 1606. Besides this great work, the Adam and Eve, Annunciation, and Temptation chapels, also universally ascribed to Tabachetti, are given as completed in the 1586 edition of Caccia. Other work not generally ascribed to him, but which I

<sup>1</sup> *Registre aux transports de la haute cour de Dinant*, 1597-1600, folio 293.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1600-1604, folio 112.

## *Ex Voto*

do not doubt is his, may be seen in at least one figure in the Capture chapel, and again in the Flagellation, and Crowning with Thorns chapels, all of which are given as complete in the 1586 edition of Caccia; so that roughly I should say there was from six to eight years' work by Tabachetti remaining at Varallo that must have been done before 1586, and this would fix his arrival as about the year 1580. We have seen that in December 1587 his parents and younger sister had recently died, and the fact that the sister was under age makes it improbable that Jean was then much over thirty. Approximately, then, we may assume that he was born about 1560. In this case he must have left home when not more than twenty, so that work of his is hardly likely to be found in Belgium.

Up to 1586, therefore, we have a meagre but fairly definite outline of Tabachetti's career, but here there comes a hiatus of three or four years during which I cannot trace him. Fassola and Torrotti both say that he began the Salutation chapel, but lost his reason soon afterwards, leaving the work to be finished by some one else. This chapel is given as completed in the 1586 edition of Caccia. It does not follow that it was quite finished; it would be enough for Caccia if it had been well advanced; but that Tabachetti was about this time unable to act for himself may be gathered from the Dinant deed of 1587. His "gardien" or "tuteur" is "datif," that is to say, appointed by the court. He has neither returned nor appointed any one to act for him as he appears to have done in the deeds of 1599 and 1601. Whether mad or no, he was probably under restraint; but considering that after 1590 he had an active, distinguished, and successful career of certainly twenty, and probably fifty years, it is more likely than not that he was never really mad.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Tabachetti died in 1615. See p. xx.]



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That he was, however, either absent from Varallo or at Varallo but unable to work may be gathered from another source. We can date the Massacre of the Innocents chapel with singular precision; it is just begun in the 1586 edition of Caccia, and is completed in that of 1590; moreover, one of the figures is dated 1590. Considering the brilliant success of the Journey to Calvary chapel, this work would surely have been given to Tabachetti if he had been able to do it—unless, indeed, there was some intrigue to which he was sacrificed. Even if it were not originally given to him he would surely have been entrusted with its completion when Paracca broke down, if he had been on the spot and in a fit state to work. The fact that he was not so entrusted suggests that Tabachetti was either absent or in confinement for a considerable time.

I have recently found traces that I have no doubt are his at Saas im Grund in Switzerland, which, as the first village of importance on the Swiss side of the Monte Moro pass, is perhaps the most natural place in which to look for a fugitive from Varallo. Here there are fifteen small chapels containing wooden figures about two feet high and painted like those at Varallo. Having been told of these chapels by Mr. Fortescue of the British Museum, it occurred to me that they might have some connection with Varallo, so I went to see them and found my surmise well founded. The chapels are: (1) Annunciation; (2) Salutation; (3) Nativity; (4) Purification; (5) Christ disputing with the Doctors; (6) Agony in the Garden; (7) Flagellation; (8) Crowning with Thorns; (9) Journey to Calvary; (10) Crucifixion; (11) Resurrection; (12) Ascension; (13) Descent of the Holy Spirit; (14) Assumption of the Virgin; (15) Coronation of the Virgin.

The Flagellation, Crowning with Thorns, and Journey to Calvary chapels are evidently reminiscences of

## *Ex Voto*

the corresponding chapels at Varallo. So, I think, but speak with less confidence, is the Purification, though containing more figures than the limited Varallo space would allow of; but there is no trace of allusion to any other Varallo chapel, and the first three of these four, if not the whole four, are by Tabachetti. The horses in the Saas chapels are all of Flemish breed, and have no affinity with the Arab type adopted by Gaudenzio Ferrari; throughout the works, moreover, Northern influence is observable, but Northern influence modified by long sojourn in Italy. Certain details of costume peculiar to Tabachetti at Varallo—I refer to his treatment of the lappets or lists (or whatever the right term may be) of the tunics of Roman soldiers—are invariably repeated at Saas. I think, therefore, with some confidence that the designs for the work were furnished by Tabachetti himself, though the actual cutting of the wood—Tabachetti being unused to this material—was done by a local wood carver.

For a more detailed description of these chapels I must refer the reader to the *Universal Review* for November 1890<sup>1</sup>; I will only add here that the execution of the figures is very rude and greatly inferior to the design. Some few figures, as those of Christ in the Agony in the Garden, and in the Crucifixion chapels, and the end figures in the Descent of the Holy Spirit, were probably cut by Tabachetti, but a sculptor in a plastic material would dislike wood, nor indeed, without some training, would he be readily able to work in it. Many figures have evidently disappeared; a few were perhaps added in 1709 to supply some of those that were lost. The condition of the chapels—and they merit careful preservation—leaves much to be desired.

<sup>1</sup> Butler's paper, "Art in the Valley of Saas," is reprinted in his *Collected Essays* in the Shrewsbury Edition.—A.T.B.

## *Tabachetti*

I have searched in vain for traces of Tabachetti lower down the valley than Saas. There is no analogous work in the neighbourhood, nor can he have stayed at Saas long for Cav. Aless. Godio tells us that Tabachetti was summoned to Crea in 1590 or not long afterwards, and did forty chapels there—most of which have perished. In several deeds now at Vercelli and bearing dates between 1600 and 1608, he is found buying property in that neighbourhood. In my first edition I assumed too hastily that he did not return to Varallo. Finding all his chapels but one—that contains only three figures—mentioned in the 1590 edition of Caccia, I thought it most likely that this last had been done immediately on his recovering his liberty and just before he went to Crea, that is to say, at the end of 1590 or the beginning of 1591. I have since found a guide-book to the Sacro Monte published in 1606 and re-issued in 1610, with no change except in the title-page. This book is not in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, and I did not know of its existence; when I found it I saw, to my surprise, that the missing chapel was still not given, though other changes had all been duly noted. It was plain, therefore, that Tabachetti had returned to Varallo, if only for a visit, some year after 1606. I lay no stress on the 1610 edition, for it is probably not even a reprint, but will show other reason for thinking that his return was not earlier than the year 1610 or thereabouts.

In the Ecce Homo chapel, the figures in which can be dated with some precision as about 1610, two or three figures from the grating on the right, but hardly observable from outside, there is a man holding a staff. I had for some time suspected this figure to be by Tabachetti, but believing that by 1610, to which date the Ecce Homo figures should be assigned, he had long left Varallo, and having strong reason for thinking

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that the figure was designed for its present position and had not been taken from any other chapel, I did not see how he could have done it. On discovering that he had returned some time after 1606, it became easy to understand this figure as well as at least one other, also of extraordinary merit, in the same chapel. No doubt Tabachetti helped D'Enrico in the composition of the work, which is finer than any other by him, and it is to the *Ecce Homo* period that the First Vision of St. Joseph chapel—the one not mentioned in the guide-books of 1590 and 1606—should be assigned.

The portrait of Tabachetti above referred to is also in the *Ecce Homo* chapel. I was led to find it by the following considerations. The figures against the left-hand wall run inwards from the grating as by the sketch on p. 93. The extreme figure to the left is probably that of Stefano Scotto, Gaudenzio Ferrari's master. Next but one to him comes Leonardo da Vinci. These two figures are replicas of the two extreme figures to the left in Gaudenzio Ferrari's Crucifixion chapel, of which an illustration is given, to face p. 172, and are no doubt taken from Gaudenzio's original Journey to Calvary chapel. They were probably placed here because there was no room for them in the present Pietà chapel, when the Journey to Calvary figures were moved into it from their original site. These two characters were perhaps repeated to aid the dramatic unity of the various scenes, but the Crucifixion version is the better rendering, and must also have been, by a good many years, the later one. I should say that the *Ecce Homo* Leonardo had hair on his head originally, but that only the marks of the glue now remain. I said nothing about this second Leonardo figure in my first edition, for I thought that one life-sized statue of a Leonardo da Vinci by a Gaudenzio Ferrari was as much of a find at one time as any

## *Tabachetti*

critic with the smallest pretensions to culture would put up with.

No doubt the two figures originally stood side by side as in the Crucifixion chapel. Tabachetti and D'Enrico must have perfectly well known who they were, and probably only separated them in order to show some



FOUR FIGURES IN THE ECCE HOMO CHAPEL

one else nearer the grating. The intercalated figure is turning his head so that it can be seen and away from the central incident of the chapel; an excuse for this is found in the pocket-handkerchief, but care is taken that it shall not hide the face, and the figure is obviously a portrait of a young man from twenty-five to thirty years old. This was precisely Giovanni D'Enrico's own age, and it was perhaps through desire to show better

## *Ex Voto*

the artist of the Ecce Homo chapel that the other two older artists were separated. The fact that Giovanni D'Enrico's portrait was placed here may explain the tradition still existing at Varallo that the figure of Stefano Scotto is a portrait of Giovanni D'Enrico's brother Tanzio, which cannot be the case. Assuming, then, that we have here an artist's corner, and being sure that Tabachetti worked in the chapel as well as D'Enrico, I could not help hoping that he too might have left his portrait here, in which case it should stand next to that of Leonardo da Vinci. The figure here placed is one of extraordinary beauty, and on examining it, I immediately found a V cut before baking, on the hat of the figure, as shown in the illustration given herewith. The V is invisible till one is well inside the chapel, and is probably the Italianized form of W, a letter which the Italians have not got. A second V to complete the W, according to the enigmatic fashion of the time, is cut also on the wrist of the figure. I have searched the other figures of the chapel in vain for any signature or inscription, and, indeed, know none on any figures on the Sacro Monte except three in the Massacre of the Innocents chapel, and two monograms lately observed by Signor Arienta, one of which we take to be that of Gaudenzio Ferrari,<sup>1</sup> and a Z on one figure in the Journey to Calvary.

Tabachetti did not write anything on any of the figures in the Journey to Calvary chapel, but some one, whom I feel safe in assuming to have been the sculptor himself, has sealed one figure with the seal of which a copy is here given. The figure chosen was the one that is beating back the Marys, and he stamped his seal four or five times on the small of its back, leaving one clean and one blurred impression. If he had been

<sup>1</sup> See p. 176.



PORTRAIT OF TABACHETTI





## Tabachetti

able to Italianize the W—which doubtless stands for Wespín—on the seal, he would probably have done so. Perhaps it was because he knew he had signed, or was signing, his great chapel with a plain W that he was led to sign his portrait with an initial only. I say “was signing,” for I think it likely that the seal was placed in 1610, not in 1586. If he had wanted to sign his work in 1586 he would have done so while the clay was still wet; in 1610 he could not well cut into the hard baked clay, so he sealed it instead. The man whom he has sealed has a Flemish cast of face, and I have sometimes fancied it may be a portrait of the sculptor’s father—done, of course, from memory.

I should say that the arms on the seal are not those of the De Wespín family, and that I have not been able to find anything like them, either in Flemish or Italian armorial bearings; the only thing that occurs to me as possible is that Tabachetti got a new grant of arms when he had finally adopted



TABACHETTI'S  
SEAL

Italy as his country, and modified the cauldrons with three feet to them that figured in the arms of his copper-beating ancestors into cups with crosses underneath them.

If I am right in thinking that the Vecchietto and the Ecce Homo portrait represent the same person,<sup>1</sup> we have a fuller acquaintance with Tabachetti’s personal appearance at the ages of about fifty and eighty than we have with that of any other great master, hardly excepting even Rembrandt. Strange, that one who has been so much lost to sight for some three hundred years should now come before us with such startling vividness. Happily there is a difference between the

<sup>1</sup> Butler afterwards abandoned this theory. See pp. xix, xxi of the present volume.—A.T.B.

## *Ex Voto*

two portraits which tells its own story. In 1610 the memory of the five years during which he was probably in a mediaeval Italian madhouse is still heavy upon him; the iron has entered into his soul. In 1640 the storm has long gone by, and has been followed by a serene and lovely sunset. In 1610 he is still fighting and praying for help; in 1640 he is praising God as one who may depart in peace—looking for the joy of his Lord and seeing something even here of the everlasting light that illumines saints and angels.

I do not think that his second visit to Varallo was for more than a few months or even weeks. He had bought property at Serralunga, and the numerous families in that neighbourhood who still bear his name suggest that he lived there till he died. I suppose that, tempted perhaps by a desire to see his great work with Morazzone's frescoes behind it, he returned to Varallo and did the, to him, light works above referred to. I believe him to have worked also in the Capture chapel at this time. Being at Varallo, no doubt he took a four hours' walk over the Colma to Orta, where the finest chapel—the only one about which enthusiasm is possible—was then in progress, and I do not doubt he lent Dionigi Bussola a hand, as he had lent D'Enrico with the *Ecce Homo* chapel. I feel sure, indeed, that three or four figures in the left-hand foreground of the Canonization of St. Francis chapel are by Tabachetti, but I hardly expect any one who has not been inside the chapel to see how great a difference there is between this left-hand corner and any other work at Orta. Those, however, who know Tabachetti's *Martyrdom of St. Eusebius* at Crea will readily recognize the St. Eusebius as reappearing in a head against the wall in the corner just referred to.

In conclusion, I would add that the fact of Tabachetti's

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chetti's having returned to Varallo in 1610 suggests reflections in regard to the figures of Herod and Caiaphas now given to D'Enrico. We know by a letter of Bishop Bescapè's that the Herod chapel should have been begun in 1606 or shortly afterwards. It would be ready for the figures by 1610, and I think it more likely than not that D'Enrico, who did the greater part of the work, got Tabachetti to do the principal figure. This is so greatly better than any other in the chapel that in my first edition I should certainly have given it to Tabachetti if I had not believed him to have left Varallo many years before the Herod chapel was taken in hand. The knowledge that he was again at Varallo while this work was in progress changes the position, and I have little hesitation in thinking that the figure of Herod is by him. I do not think, however, that he did the Laughing Boys of which a photograph is given to face p. 151.

The Caiaphas chapel was not actually begun till much later, but the site for it had been marked out by 1606, and it was intended that it should be at once proceeded with. It is not unlikely that D'Enrico got Tabachetti to do the principal figure for this chapel also, and had it stored against the time it should be wanted. Convenience in this respect may have dictated the fact that Caiaphas should not be seated on his throne, but detached as he now stands. Or again, if, as is possible, Tabachetti was at Montrigone some time between 1630 and 1640, he would assuredly go on to Varallo, only ten miles off, and may very well have done the Caiaphas then. At any rate, I do not believe that this figure is by any one except Tabachetti. If the Vecchietto found its way to Varallo from the dismantled Paradiso chapel at Crea—and this is where it ought to have stood originally—he must have been still working

## *Ex Voto*

at that place about the year 1640, for that it is his own portrait I do not doubt; but he must have worked also at other places besides Crea. He was evidently of a laconic character, little given to self-assertion, and if he signed a work at all, did so as meagrely as he could, but I am not without hope that work will yet be one day found that will appear plainly enough to have been by him.

The only other place in the Valsesia where I at all suspect him to have done anything is at Montrigone,<sup>1</sup> near Borgosesia, where, as I have just said, he may have lent much the same hand in passing that he lent at Orta and on the occasion of his second visit to Varallo. I am tempted to ascribe both the Prophetess Anna and the Virgin's Grandmother to Tabachetti; as also the head of a dead Christ, outside the church, which is attached to a body that has been done by some one else, but I am well aware how speculative such ascription must be, and dare not allow myself to go beyond a pious wish that a figure or two more by so great a man should have been preserved to us. At Varallo, over and above his work on the Sacro Monte, there is an exceedingly beautiful Madonna by him, in the parish church of S. Gaudenzio, and one head of a man with a ruff—a mere fragment—which Cav. Prof. Antonini showed me in the Museum, and assured me was by Tabachetti.

When my first edition was published I knew of no English writer who had so much as mentioned Tabachetti's name, except, of course, Sir Henry Layard, who has been already sufficiently dealt with. As these pages, however, leave me, I see a review of *Ex Voto*

<sup>1</sup> It was established later that Tabachetti could not have worked at Montrigone. See p. xxi of the present volume, also p. xiii (note).—A.T.B.

## Tabachetti

in the *Portfolio* for December 1888, from which I take the following:

“It has been interesting while reading this volume to compare the author’s criticisms with notes by the art-writer and former contributor to the *Portfolio*, the late Mr. J. B. Atkinson, who carefully studied the art of this Sacro Monte in the year 1885. Of the Crucifixion chapel he writes of the fresco background as in Ferrari’s best manner, the plastic figures being inferior, agreeing here with Mr. Butler, as also in the case of the Magi chapel, where the frescoes are noted as sketchy, but ‘painted in the true fresco method, broadly and simply; the style grandiose and showy, after Ferrari’s manner.’ The figures in the round are stated to be finely modelled, especially in faces, hands, and feet. Mr. Atkinson is strenuous, also, in note of the dramatic intensity of the Journey to Calvary, which our author assigns to Tabachetti. ‘The paintings, though coarse and damaged, show Gaudenzio Ferrari’s style in strength and dramatic show. The horses and horsemen are very fine, the figures of a lady and child are beautiful.’ We quote this corroborative testimony from an accredited and impartial witness,” etc.

Mr. Atkinson cannot, of course, have supposed that Morazzone’s frescoes in the Journey to Calvary chapel are by Gaudenzio Ferrari, nor do I see that Gaudenzio is more particularly showy and grandiose than other people, but I am too much obliged to any one who gives me support in the matter of Tabachetti’s greatness to cavil about such small matters as this. I do not gather that Mr. Atkinson’s remarks have been published anywhere, and need hardly say that if I had known of their existence I should have referred to them.

I will conclude with a note taken from p. 47 of Part I

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of Cav. Alessandro Godio's admirable *Cronaca di Crea*.<sup>1</sup>

The note runs:

“The present writer found himself involved in a long dispute, through having entered the lists against the Valsesian writers, who reckon Tabachetti among the distinguished sons of the Val Sesia, and for having said that he was born in Flanders. After a more successful search in the above-named [Vercelli?] archive, under the letter B No. 6, over and above the deeds of 1600 and 1606, already referred to in the ‘Vesillo della libertà,’ No. 39, Sept. 5, 1863, I found, under numbers 308, 417, 498, 622, of the unarranged papers of Notary Teodoro Caligaris, four more deeds dated 1602, 1604, 1605, 1608, in which the Sculptor Gio. Battista Tabachetti is not only described as a Fleming, but his birthplace is given as follows: ‘Vendidit, tradidit nobili Joanni Tabacheto filio quondam nobili Gulielmi de Dinante de Liesa [Liège] nunc incola Serralungæ.’ Since, then, he was buying considerable property at Serralunga during the above-named year, it is plain that he did not work continuously at Varallo from 1590 to 1606, as contended by the Valsesian writers quoted by An. Cav. Carlo Dionisotti, the distinguished author of the *Valle Sesia*. Moreover, from the year 1590 and onward the chapels of Crea were begun, and of these, by advice of Monsignor Tullio del Carretto, Bishop of Casale, at the bidding of Michel Angelo da Liverno, who was Vicar of Crea, Tabachetti designed not fifteen but forty, and found himself at the head of the direction of the great work that was then engaging the attention of the foremost Italian artists of the day.”

P.S.—As these pages leave my hands it occurs to me that the figure of Herod in the Herod chapel at Varallo

<sup>1</sup> Torino, 1887.

## *Tabachetti*

is perhaps inspired, remotely indeed, but still inspired, by the Herod in a wing of the great picture by Quentin Matsys now at Antwerp; I have not, however, this picture before me, and am afraid to speak positively. The fact that it would not be the same Herod would not matter. It occurs to me also that there is much in common between Tabachetti's villains and those of Quentin Matsys.

FOR MY ACCOUNT OF GIOVANNI D'ENRICO I turn to Signor Galloni's *Uomini e fatti celebri di Valle Sesia*. He was second of three brothers, Melchiorre, Giovanni, and Antonio, commonly called Tanzio, who were born at the German-speaking village of Alagna, that stands at the head of the Val Sesia. Signor Galloni says that the elder brother, Melchiorre, painted the frescoes in the Temptation chapel in 1594, and the Last Judgment on the facciata of the parish church at Riva in 1597.

The house occupied by the family of D'Enrico was, as I gather from a note communicated to Signor Galloni by Cav. Don Farinetti of Alagna, in the fraction of Alagna called Giacomolo, where a few years ago a last descendant of the family was still residing. The house is of wood, old and black with smoke; on the wooden gallery or lobby that runs in front of it, and above the low and narrow doorways, there is an inscription or verse of the Bible, "Allein Gott Ehre," dated 1609. The small oratory hard by is said to have been also the property of the D'Enrico family, and in the *ancona* of the little altar there is a picture representing the Virgin of not inconsiderable merit, with a beautiful gilded frame in excellent preservation. On the background of this picture there is the *stemma* of the D'Enrico family, and an inscription in Latin bearing the names of John and Eva D'Enrico.

The exact dates of the births of the three brothers are unknown, but the eldest and youngest were described in a certificate of good character, dated 11th February 1600, as "juvenes bonæ vocis, conditionis et famæ," so that if we assume Melchiorre to have been born in 1575,<sup>1</sup> Giovanni in 1580, and Antonio in 1585, we shall, in no case, be more than five years or so in

<sup>1</sup> See Signor Galloni's first and tenth notes, pp. 175 and 180.



## Giovanni D'Enrico

error. I own to being able to see little merit in any of Melchiorre's work, of which the reader will find a sample in the frescoes behind the old Adam and Eve, but it is believed that he for the most part painted the terra-cotta figures, rather than backgrounds. Nor do I like the work of Tanzio—which may be seen, perhaps, to the best advantage in the Herod chapel. Tanzio was a stronger man than Melchiorre, but Giovanni is reputed the ablest of the three brothers, and it is to him alone that I will ask the reader to devote attention.

Signor Galloni calls Giovanni D'Enrico a pupil of Tabachetti, which he very well may have been during Tabachetti's visit at Varallo in 1610, but hardly earlier, unless, indeed, he worked under him at Crea. He was an architect as well as sculptor, and is believed to have made the modification of Pellegrino Tibaldi's designs that was ultimately adopted for the Palazzo di Pilato, Caiaphas, and Herod chapels. He was also architect of the Chiesa Maggiore on the Sacro Monte, his design having been approved 1st April 1614. He is believed to have done a Madonna and child, a St. Rocco, and a St. Sebastian in the parish church at Alagna; he also sent many figures away, some of which may possibly be found in the disused chapels of Graglia, if indeed these contain anything at all. He died at Montrigone near Borgosesia in 1644, while superintending the work of his pupil and *collaborateur* Giacomo Ferro, who, it is said, has placed his master's portrait near the bed of S. Anna in his chapel of the Birth of the Virgin at Montrigone. Others say that the figure in question does not represent D'Enrico, and that his portrait is found in a niche in the chapel itself. This portrait, allowing for difference of age, agrees very well with the portrait in the Ecce Homo chapel.

Since my first edition was published I have been to

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Montrigone, and find the figure in question to be that of a woman. I showed a photograph of it to an eminent medical man at Varallo, and without telling what it was, asked him whether the figure was male or female. He replied at once that she was not only a female, but that she was a "suocera," and added that she was a "suocera tremenda"—"a mother-in-law of the first magnitude." There can be no doubt he is right, and that we have here the only representation which I have yet met with of no less considerable a person than the Virgin's Grandmother. For fuller information I must refer the reader to the *Universal Review* for November 1888.<sup>1</sup>

Giacomo Ferro appears to have been his only pupil and his only *collaborateur*. There can, I think, be little doubt that the greater part of the work generally ascribed to D'Enrico is really by Giacomo Ferro, and the uncertainty as to what figures are actually by D'Enrico himself makes it very difficult to form a just opinion about his genius. Some chapels are given to him, as for example the Flagellation and Crowning with Thorns, which are mentioned as completed in the 1586 edition of Caccia, when D'Enrico was at most a child. True, he may have remodelled these chapels, but I have not yet met with evidence that he actually did so, and I do not think he did.

In those in which he was undoubtedly assisted by Giacomo Ferro, as for example the Caiaphas, Herod, four Pilate, Nailing to the Cross, and the Descent from the Cross chapels, perhaps the safest rule will be to give the few really excellent figures that are to be found in each of them to D'Enrico himself and to ascribe all the

<sup>1</sup> Part of the article to which Butler here refers is reprinted as "The Sanctuary of Montrigone" in his *Collected Essays* in the Shrewsbury Edition. See also p. xiii (note) of this volume.—A.T.B.

## Giovanni D'Enrico

inferior work, of which unfortunately there is too much, to Giacomo Ferro; but, as I have said, it is difficult to think that the Herod and the Caiaphas are by him. That the assistance rendered by Ferro was on a very large scale may be gathered from the fact that there was a deed drawn up between him and his master whereby he was to receive half the money that was paid to D'Enrico,—a quasi-partnership indeed seems to have existed between the two sculptors. This deed is referred to by Signor Galloni on page 178 of his *Uomini e Fatti*, and on the same page he quotes an extract from a lawsuit between Giacomo Ferro and the town of Varallo which gives us a curious insight into the manner in which the artists of the Sacro Monte were paid. From a *procès-verbal* in connection with this suit Signor Galloni quotes the following extract:

“And further the said deputies allege that in the accounts rendered by the said master Giovanni D'Enrico in respect of the pontifical thrones in the Caiaphas and Nailing to the Cross chapels, these have been valued at the rate of four statues for each several throne and horse, whereas it appears from old accounts rendered by other statuaries that they have been hitherto charged only at the rate of three statues for each throne and horse. Wherefore the said deputies claim to deduct the overcharge of one statue for each horse and throne, which being thirteen at the rate of 10 and a quarter scudi for each figure, would give a total deduction of 132 and a half scudi.”

It appears in another part of the same *procès-verbal* that Giovanni D'Enrico had been paid in 1640 the sum of 4240 lire and 8 soldi. Giacomo Ferro and his brother Antonio were Giovanni D'Enrico's heirs, from which it would appear that he either died unmarried or left no children.

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To say that D'Enrico will compare with Tabachetti would be an obvious exaggeration; indeed, there are only very few figures on the Sacro Monte about which we can feel as certain that they are by him as we can be that most of those given to Tabachetti and Gaudenzio are actually by them. So that comparison of any kind is rendered doubly difficult. For not only have we to reckon with Giacomo Ferro, who, if he had half the pay, we may be sure did not less than half the figures, and probably very much more, but we must reckon with the figures taken from older chapels when reconstructed as in D'Enrico's time was the case with more than one. It is not likely that these were destroyed if by any hook or crook they could be made to do duty in some other shape, and it must be admitted that mediaeval sculptors show great facility of resource from a business point of view as well as an artistic. More probably they are most of them still existing up and down D'Enrico's various chapels, but so doctored, if the expression may be pardoned, that Gaudenzio himself would not know them. In the *Ecce Homo* chapel, which is his finest work, and which contains many admirable figures, we can say with confidence that the extreme figure to the left and the figure next to it but one are by Gaudenzio, from some one of his chapels now lost; we are able to detect this by an accident, but there are other figures in the same chapel and not a few elsewhere, about which we can have no confidence that they are by D'Enrico.

What, then, with these figures, and what with Giacomo Ferro, it is not easy to say what D'Enrico did or did not do. Moreover, D'Enrico shows his figures off, which Tabachetti never does: in his chapels each figure has its attention a good deal drawn to the desirableness of neither being itself lost sight of, nor impeding the view of its neighbours. This is fatal, and though

## *Giovanni D'Enrico*

Giacomo Ferro is doubtless more practically guilty in the matter than D'Enrico, yet D'Enrico is the responsible author of the work, and must bear the blame accordingly. Standing once with Signor Pizzetta of Varallo, before D'Enrico's great Nailing of Christ to the Cross chapel, I asked him casually how he thought it compared with Tabachetti's Journey to Calvary. He replied, "Questo non sacrifica niente," meaning that Tabachetti thought of the action much and but little of whether or no the actors got in each other's way, whereas D'Enrico was too often bent on making his figures steer clear of one another; thus his chapels want the concert and unity of action that give such life to Tabachetti's. Nevertheless, in spite of this defect the general verdict which assigns him the third place among the workers on the Sacro Monte cannot be reasonably disputed; but this third place must be given rather in respect of quantity than quality, for in dramatic power and highly wrought tragic action he is inferior to the sculptor of the Massacre of the Innocents chapel, to which I will return when I come to the chapel in question.

I may say in passing that Cicognara, Lübke, and Perkins have all omitted to mention Giovanni D'Enrico as a sculptor, though Nagler mentions his two brothers as painters. Nagler gives the two brothers D'Enrico as all bearing the patronymic Tanzio, which I am told is in reality only a corruption of the Christian name of the third brother. Zani mentions Giovanni D'Enrico as well as his two brothers, and calls him "celebre," but he calls all the three brothers "Tanzii, Tanzi, Tanzio, or Tanzo."

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE ASCENT, AND THE FIRST FOUR  
CHAPELS

THE ASCENT TO THE SACRO MONTE begins immediately after the church of S. Maria delle Grazie has been passed, and is made by a large broad road paved with rounded stones, and beautifully shaded by the chestnuts that grow on the steep side of the mountain. The old road up the mountain was below the present, and remains of it may yet be seen. Ere long a steeper narrower road branches off to the right hand, which makes rather a shorter cut, and is commonly called the "Strada della Madonna." From this name it has become generally believed that the Madonna once actually came to Varallo to see the Sacro Monte, and took this shorter road. There is no genuine tradition, however, to this effect, and the belief may be traced to misapprehension of a passage in Fassola and Torrotti, who say that the main road represents the path taken by Christ himself on his journey to Calvary, while the other symbolizes the short cut taken by the Virgin when she went to rejoin him after his resurrection. When he was *Assistente*, which I gather to have been much what the Director of the Sacro Monte is now, Torrotti had some poetry put up to say this.

At the point where the two roads again meet there is a large wooden cross, from which the faithful may help themselves to a chip. That they do get chips is evident by the state of the cross, but the wood is hard, and none but the very faithful will get so much but that plenty will be left for those who may come after them. I saw a stout elderly lady trying to get a chip last summer; she was baffled, puzzled, frowned a good deal, and was perspiring freely. She tried here, and she tried there, but could get no chip; and presently began to cry. Jones and I had been watching her perplexity,

## *Ascent of the Sacro Monte*

as we came up the Strada della Madonna, and having a stouter knife than hers offered to help her. She was most grateful, when, not without difficulty, Jones succeeded in whittling for her a piece about an inch long, and as thick as the wood of a matchbox. "Per Bacco," she exclaimed, still agitated, and not without asperity, "I never saw such a cross in my life." The old cross, considered to be now past further whittling, was lying by the roadside ready to be taken away. I had wanted to get the lady a chip from this, thinking it looked as if it would lend itself more easily to the design, but she said it would not do. They have a new cross every year, and they always select a hard knotty uncompromising piece of wood for the purpose. The old is then taken away and burnt for firewood.

Of this cross Fassola says it was here ("e quì fù dove") the Virgin met her son, and that for this reason a small chapel was placed rather higher up, which represents the place where she took a little rest, and was hence called the Cappella del Riposo. It was decorated with frescoes by Gaudenzio, which have long since disappeared; these were early works, and among the first undertaken by him on the Sacro Monte; the chapel remains, but may, and probably will, be passed without notice. A little higher still, there is another very small and unimportant chapel containing a decayed St. Jerome by Giovanni D'Enrico, and above this, facing the visitor at the last turn of the road, is the chapel erected in memory of Cesare Maio, or Maggi, a Neapolitan, Marquis of Moncrivelli, and one of Charles the Fifth's generals. He died in 1568. Many years before his death he had commanded an armed force against the Valsesians, but when his horse, on approaching Varallo, caught sight of the Sacro Monte, it genuflected three times and pawed a great cross on the road

## *Ex Voto*

with its feet. This had such an effect upon the rider that he had thenceforward to become a munificent benefactor of the Sacro Monte, and expressly desired to be buried there. I do not know where the horse was buried. His chapel contains nothing of importance, nor yet does the small oratory with a crucifix in memory of a benefactor, one Giovanni Pschel Alemanno; this is at the top of the ascent and close to the smaller entrance to the Sacro Monte.

At this smaller entrance the visitor will be inclined to enter, but he should not do so if he wishes to take the chapels in the order in which they are numbered. He should continue the broad road until he reaches the excellent inn kept by Signor Topini, and the shops where "corone" and pilgrims' beads are sold. The inn and shops are mentioned by Fassola and by Torrotti. Fassola in 1671 says of the inn that it will afford accommodation for people of all ranks, and that though any one with other curiosity may stay in the town, those who would enjoy their devotion quietly and diffusively can do so more at their ease here. Of the shops he says that they sell "corone, Storie della Fabrica," "and other like instruments of devotion" ("ed altri instrumenti simili di divozione," p. 80). Torrotti says they sell his book there, with images, and various devout curiosities ("e varie cose curiose di divozione," p. 66). The shutters are strong and probably the original ones.

At Varese there is a very beautiful lady, one among many others hardly if at all less beautiful on the same mountain, of whom I once asked what people did with these "corone." She said, "Le adoperano per pregare," "They make use of them to pray with." She then asked whether the English ever prayed. I said of course they did; that all nations, even the Turks, prayed. "E Turco lei?" she said, with a singularly sweet, kind,



## *Adam and Eve*

and beneficent expression. I said I was not, but I do not think she believed me.

Passing now under the handsome arch which forms the main entrance to the sacred precincts we come to

### *Chapel No. 1. Adam and Eve*

This chapel is perhaps the only one in the case of which Pellegrino Tibaldi's design was carried out; and even here it has been in many respects modified. In Tibaldi's notes it is stated that the statues and frescoes in this chapel had still to be made. The statues were made in due course by Tabachetti; the original internal frescoes were by Domenico Alfani Perugino, but they have perished. Tibaldi makes no mention of any earlier Adam and Eve chapel, but he has omitted other chapels which we know to have existed. The original frescoes do not appear to have been executed till 1594-1600, but the terra-cotta work is described as complete in the 1586 edition of Caccia in terms that leave no doubt but that the present group is intended; it is probably among the first works executed by Tabachetti on the Sacro Monte. That he did the Adam and Eve is not doubted. If he also did the animals, he had made great progress by the time he came to the Temptation chapel, for the animals in this last chapel are far finer than those in the Adam and Eve chapel. Six of those in this last-named chapel—the hare, the rabbit, the stag, a bustard, and two more of smaller importance are by the late Cav. Prof. Antonini. The rest are old.

The present chapel superseded an earlier one with the same subject, which was probably on the site now occupied by the Crowning with Thorns, inasmuch as in this chapel the fresco on one wall still represents Adam and Eve being dismissed from Paradise. Signor Arienta

## *Ex Voto*

pointed this out to me, and I think it sufficiently determines the position of the original Adam and Eve chapel. The evidence for the existence of the earlier chapel throws so much light upon the way in which figures have been shifted about and whole chapels have disappeared, leaving only an incidental trace or two behind them in some other of those now existing, that I shall not hesitate to reproduce it here.

We were told in the town that there had been an old Adam and an old Eve, and that these two figures were now doing duty as Roman soldiers in chapel No. 23, which represents the Capture of Christ. On investigation we found, against the wall, two figures dressed as Roman soldiers that evidently had something wrong with them. The draperies of all the other figures are painted, either terra-cotta or wood, but with these two they are real, being painted linen or calico, dipped in thin mortar or plaster of Paris, and real drapery generally means that the figure has had something done to it. The armour, where armour shows, is not quite of the same pattern as that painted on the other figures, nor is it of the same make; in the case of the remoter figure it does not go down far enough, and leaves a lucid interval of what was evidently once bare stomach, but has now been painted the brightest blue that could be found, so that it does not catch the eye as flesh; a little further examination was enough to make us strongly suspect that the figures had both been originally nude, and in this case the story current in Varallo was probably true.

Then the question arose, which was Adam, and which Eve? The farther figure was the larger and therefore ought to have been Adam, but it had long hair, and looked a good deal more like a woman than the other did. The nearer figure had a beard and moustaches,





TABACHETTI'S ADAM AND EVE

## Adam and Eve

and was quite unlike a woman; true, we could see no sign of bosom with the farther figure, but neither could we with the nearer. On the whole, therefore, we settled it that the nearer and moustached soldier was Adam, and the more distant long-haired beardless one, Eve. In the evening, however, Cav. Prof. Antonini and several of the other best Varallo authorities were on the Sacro Monte, and had the grating removed so that we could get inside the chapel, which we were not slow to do. The state of the drapery showed that curiosity had been already rife upon the subject, and, observing this, Jones and I gently lifted as much of it as was necessary, and put the matter for ever beyond future power of question that the farther long-haired, beardless figure was Adam, and the nearer, moustached one, Eve. They are now looking in the same direction, as joining in the hue and cry against Christ, but were originally turned towards one another; the one offering, and the other taking, the apple.

Tabachetti's Eve, in the Creation or Adam and Eve chapel, is a figure of remarkable beauty, and a very great improvement on her predecessor. The left arm is a restoration by Cav. Prof. Antonini, but no one who was not told of the fact would suspect it. The heads both of the Adam and the Eve have been less successfully repainted than the rest of the figures, and have suffered somewhat in consequence, but the reader will note the freedom from any approach to *barocco* maintained throughout the work. The serpent is effective, and the animals are by no means unpleasing. Speaking for myself, I have found the work continually grow upon me during the many years I have known it.

The walls of this, and, indeed, of all the chapels, were once covered with votive pictures recording the *Grazie* with which each several chapel should be credited, but

## *Ex Voto*

these generally pleasing, though perhaps sometimes superstitious, minor satellites of the larger artistic luminaries have long since disappeared. It is plain that either the chapels are losing their powers of bringing the *Grazie* about, or that we moderns care less about saying "thank you" when we have been helped out of a scrape than our forefathers did. Fassola says:

"Molti oltre questa non mancano di lasciar qualche insigne memoria, cioè ò li dinari per incominciar, ò finire qualche Capella, ò per qualche pittura ò Statua, ò altro non essendouene pur' vno di questi Benefattori, che non habbino ottenute le grazie desiderate di Dio, e dalla Beata Vergine, del che piene ne sono le carte, le mura delle Capelle, e Chiese con voti d'argento, ed altre infinite Tauolette, antichissime, e moderne, voti di cera ed altro, oltre tanto da esprimersi grazie, che ò per pouertà, ò per mancanza, ò per altri pensieri de' graziati restano celate."

For my own part I am sorry that these humble chronicles of three centuries or so of hairbreadth escapes are gone. Votive pictures have always fascinated me. Everything does go so dreadfully wrong in them, and yet we know it will all be set so perfectly right again directly, and that nobody will be really hurt. Besides, they are so naïve, and free from "highfalutin"; they give themselves no airs, are not review-puffed, and the people who paint them do not call one another geniuses. They are business-like, direct, and sensible; not unfrequently they acquire considerable historical interest, and every now and then there is one by an old master born out of due time—who probably wist not so much as even that there were old masters. Here, if anywhere, may be found smouldering, but still living, embers of the old art-fire of Italy, and from these, more readily than from the hot-bed atmosphere of the

## Adam and Eve

academies, may the flame be yet rekindled. Lastly, if allowed to come as they like, and put themselves where they will, they grow into a pretty, quilt-like, artlessly-arranged decoration, that will beat any mere pattern contrived of set purpose. Some half-dozen or so of the old votive pictures are still preserved in the Museum at Varallo, and are worthy of notice, one or two of them dating from the fifteenth century, and a few late autumn leaves, as it were, of images in wax still hang outside the Crowning with Thorns chapel, but the chapels are, for the most part, now without them. Each chapel was supposed to be beneficial in the case of some particular bodily or mental affliction, and Fassola often winds up his notice with a list of the Graces which are most especially to be hoped for from devotion at the chapel he is describing; he does not, however, ascribe any especial and particular Grace to the first few chapels. A few *centesimi* and perhaps a *soldo* or two still lie on the floor, thrown through the grating by pilgrims, and the number of these which any chapel can attract may be supposed to be a fair test of its popularity. These *centesimi* are a source of temptation to the small boys of Varallo, who are continually getting into trouble for extracting them by the help of willow wands and birdlime. I understand that when the *centesimi* are picked up by the authorities, some few are always left, on the same principle as that on which we leave a nest egg in a hen's nest for the hen to lay a new one to; a very little will do, but even the boys know that there must be a germ of increment left, and when they stole the coppers from the Ecce Homo chapel not long since, they still left one *centesimo* and a waistcoat button on the floor.

I am tempted to introduce here a little incident that happened to me at the Adam and Eve chapel shortly

## *Ex Voto*

after the first edition of *Ex Voto* had been published. I was trying to get a better negative of the group than I had yet got, and found it exceedingly difficult to get a view in which the nearer animals should not come too large. It was the middle of August, and very hot; I was perspiring a good deal, and have no doubt showed signs of perplexity. At this moment a young Italian of about twenty or twenty-one addressed me, cap in hand, with that exquisite courtesy and frankness for which the Italians are so justly distinguished. "Sir," said he, "I see you find it very difficult to get a good view of this chapel. I should like to help you, and believe it is in my power to do so. You see that wood? It is an excellent substitute for Paradise. You see this young lady?"—and he pointed to a comely peasant girl who was going the round of the chapels, but whom it was plain he was seeing for the first time—"she is not less beautiful than Eve herself. Persuade that young lady to go to the wood and pose for you as Eve, and I will myself gladly pose as Adam." The girl laughed, looked down, and said, "It would not be at all proper" ("sarebbe poco conveniente"), and there the matter ended. I admired the impudence of the young man and the good-humour of the girl, and as I looked at the pair thought that they would have to get the serpent and not me to photograph them.

### *Chapel No. 2. The Annunciation*

This was one of the earliest chapels, and is dated by Fassola as from 1490 to 1500. Tibaldi complains of the figures as not good enough. There is no record of any contemporary fresco background. Bordiga says that these figures were originally in the chapel now occupied by the Salutation of Mary by Elizabeth, but that having



## *Annunciation*

been long objects of popular veneration they were preserved at the time when Tabachetti took this block of buildings in hand. He adds: "The faces and extremities have a divine expression and are ancient," but both Fassola and Torrotti say that Tabachetti gave the figures new heads. Bordiga is probably right, for the figures are of wood, and hence probably before Gaudenzio Ferrari's time; the Virgin has real drapery, which, as I have said, suggests that the figure has been cut about; in this case, however, the real drapery is due to the fact that the figure itself is a mere lay figure.

Whatever the change was, it had been effected before the publication of the 1586 edition of Caccia, where the chapel is described, in immediate sequence to the Adam and Eve chapel, and in the following terms:

"Si vede poi un poco discosto, un altro Tempio, fatto ad imitatione della Cappella di Loreto, ben adornato, dove è l'Angelo che annontia l'incarnazione . . . di rilievo."

In the poetical part of the same book the figures are very warmly praised. Fassola and Torrotti both say that the Virgin was a very favourite figure—so much so that pilgrims had loaded her with jewels. One night, however, a thief tried to draw a valuable ring from her finger, when she dealt him a stunning box on the ear that stretched him senseless until he was apprehended and punished. Fassola says of the affair:

"Frà gl' altri è degna di racconto la mortificazione hauuta da vn peruerso, che fatto ardito, non sò da quale spirito diabolico, volendo rubbare alcune di dette gioie, e forse tutte, dalle mani della Beata Vergine fù reso immobile da vna guanciata della Vergine fin' à tanto, che la giustizia l' hebbe nella sua braccia; contempli ogn' vno questa Statua, che ne riporterà mosso il cuore."

Under the circumstances I should say he had better

## *Ex Voto*

contemplate her at a respectful distance. I can believe that the thief was very much mortified, but the Virgin seems to have been a good deal mortified too, for I suspect her new head was after this occurrence and not before it.

Such miracles are still of occasional if not frequent occurrence in connection with the Sacro Monte. I have a broadside printed at Milan in 1882 in which a full account is given of a recent miracle worked by the Blessed Virgin of the Sacro Monte of Varallo. It is about a young man who had been miraculously cured of a lingering illness that had baffled the skill of all the most eminent professors; so his father sent him with a lamp of gold and a large sum of money which he was to offer to the Madonna. As he was on his way he felt tired—it must be remembered that the railway was not opened till 1886—so he sat down under a tree and began to amuse himself by counting the treasure. Hardly had he begun to count when he was attacked by four desperate assassins, who with pistols and poignards did their very utmost to despoil him, but it was not the smallest use. One of the assassins was killed, and the others were so cowed that they promised, if he would only fetch them some “devotions” from the Sacro Monte, to abandon their evil courses and thenceforth lead virtuous lives.

We do not pitch our tracts quite so strongly, but need give ourselves no airs in this matter.

### *Chapel No. 3. The Salutation of Mary by Elizabeth*

This chapel does not appear in Tibaldi's plan, but the notes say that it was contemplated. The walls, according to Fassola, are old, but the figures all new—meaning, later than Gaudenzio Ferrari's time. Both

## *First Vision of St. Joseph*

Fassola and Torrotti say that Tabachetti had just begun to work on this chapel when he lost his reason, but the work is described as complete in the 1586 edition of Caccia. It is evident, as I have already shown, that his insanity was only temporary. Both writers are very brief in their statement of the fact, Fassola only saying "quando era diuenuto pazzo," and Torrotti "impazzitosi." The fresco background is meagre and forms no integral part of the design; this does not go for much, but suggests that in the original state of the chapel, which we know was an early one, there may have been but little background, the fresco background not having yet attained its full development. The figures, as already explained, are unbaked and of no great interest, but there is a nice little circular piece of stained glass about six inches in diameter representing the Annunciation and dated 1544. This, as also the frescoes, is a remainder from the period when the chapel was filled by the Annunciation figures. Fassola and Torrotti say that the original Capture chapel was on the ground floor of this building. Sig. Arienta thinks rather that this was occupied by the old Crowning with Thorns and Flagellation chapels. I must leave local students to decide this point.

### *Chapel No. 4. First Vision of St. Joseph*

Fassola and Torrotti say that this chapel was originally a servant's lodge ("ospizio delli serui della Fabrica"), and part of the building is still used as a store-room. The servants were subsequently shifted to the large house that stands on the left hand as one enters the small entrance to the Sacro Monte, opposite Giovanni Pschel's chapel, a little below the Temptation chapel.

## *Ex Voto*

The First Vision of St. Joseph is not mentioned in either the 1586 or 1590 editions of Caccia, nor yet in Revelli's guide-book of 1606; we may therefore be certain that it did not exist, and may also be sure that it was Tabachetti's last chapel upon the Sacro Monte—for that it is by him has never been disputed. We have already seen that it should be dated about 1610. I give a photograph of the very beautiful figure of St. Joseph, which must rank among the finest on the Sacro Monte. I grant that a sleeping figure is the easiest of all subjects, except a dead one, inasmuch as Nature does not here play against the artist with loaded dice, by being able to give the immediate change of position which the artist cannot. With sleep and death there is no change required, so that the hardest sleeping figure is easier than the easiest waking one; moreover, sleep is so touching and beautiful that it is one of the most taking of all subjects; nevertheless there are sleeping figures and sleeping figures, and the St. Joseph in the chapel we are considering is greatly better than the second sleeping St. Joseph in chapel No. 9, by whomsoever this figure may be—or than the sleeping Apostles by D'Enrico in chapel No. 22.

Cusa says that the Madonna is taken from a small figure modelled by Gaudenzio still existing at Valduggia in the possession of the Rivaroli family. She is a very pretty and graceful figure, and is sewing on a pillow in the middle of the composition—of course unmoved by the presence of the angel, who is only visible to her husband. The angel is also a remarkably fine figure.



FIRST VISION OF  
ST. JOSEPH



*Chapel No. 5. Visit of the Magi*

FASSOLA SAYS THAT THIS CHAPEL WAS begun about the year 1500, and completed about 1520, at the expense of certain wealthy Milanese; Torrotti repeats this. Bordiga gives it a later date, making Gaudenzio begin to work in it in 1531; he supposes that Gaudenzio left Varallo suddenly in that year to undertake work for the church of S. Cristoforo at Vercelli without quite completing the Magi frescoes; and it is indeed true that the frescoes appear to be unfinished, some parts at first sight seeming only sketched in outline, as though the work had been interrupted; but Colombo, whose industry is only equalled by his fine instinct and good sense, refers both the frescoes and their interruption to a later date. Still, Fassola may have only intended, and indeed probably did intend, that the shell of the building was completed by 1520, the figures and frescoes being deferred for want of funds, though the building was ready for occupation.

Colombo, on page 115 of his *Life and Work of Gaudenzio Ferrari*, says that Bordiga remarked the obvious difference in style between the frescoes in the Magi and the Crucifixion chapels, which he held to have been completed in 1524, but nevertheless thought seven years the utmost that passed between the two works. Colombo shows that by 1528 Gaudenzio was already established at Vercelli, and ascribes the frescoes in the Magi chapel to a date some time between 1536 and 1539, during which time he believes that Gaudenzio returned to Varallo, finding no trace of him elsewhere. The internal evidence in support of this opinion is strong, for the Crucifixion chapel is not a greater technical advance upon the frescoes in the church of

## *Ex Voto*

S. Maria delle Grazie, painted in 1513, magnificent as these last are, than the Magi frescoes are upon the Crucifixion, and an interval of ten years or so is not too much to allow between the two, for Gaudenzio Ferrari was like Giovanni Bellini, a slow but steady grower from first to last. I say technical, for as regards feeling and intention Gaudenzio probably never surpassed his S. Maria delle Grazie frescoes. The Magi frescoes have, however, unfortunately suffered from damp much more than the Crucifixion ones, and I should say they had been a good deal retouched, but by a very capable artist.

Colombo thinks that in these frescoes Gaudenzio was assisted by his son Gerolamo, who died in 1539, and, as I have said, holds that it was the death of this son which made him leave Varallo, without even finishing the frescoes on which he was engaged.

But Signor Arienta assures me that the frescoes were not in reality left incomplete: he holds that the wall on the parts where the outline shows was too dry when the colour was laid on, and that it has gradually gone, leaving the outline only. This, he tells me, not unfrequently happens, and has occurred in a good many places even in the Crucifixion chapel, where parts look flat and as though never finished, but I have found no outlines in the Crucifixion chapel. The parts in the Magi chapel that show the outline only are not likely to have been left to the last; they come in a very random haphazard way, and I have little hesitation in accepting Signor Arienta's opinion. If, however, this is wrong and the work was really unfinished, I should ascribe this fact to the violent dissensions that broke out in 1538, and should incline towards using it as an argument for assigning this date to the frescoes themselves, more especially as it fits in with whatever other meagre evidence we have.



## Visit of the Magi

Something went wrong with the funds destined for the erection of this chapel, and this may account for the length of time taken to erect the chapel itself, as well as for subsequent delay in painting it and filling it with statues. In the earlier half of his work Fassola says that certain Milanese gentlemen, "Signori della Castellanza," subscribed two hundred *scudi* gold with which to found the chapel, but that the money was in part diverted to other uses—"a matter," he says, "about which I am compelled to silence by a passage in my preface"; this passage is the expression of a desire to avoid giving offence; but Fassola says the interception of the funds involved the chapel's "remaining incomplete for some time." There seems, in fact, to have been some serious scandal in connection with the money, about which, even after 150 years, Fassola was unwilling to speak.

I would ask the reader to note in passing that in this work, high up on the spectator's right, Gaudenzio has painted some rocks with a truth which was in his time rare. In the earliest painting, rocks seem to have been considered hopeless, and were represented by a something like a mould for a jelly or blancmange; yet rocks on a grey day are steady sitters, and one would have thought the early masters would have found them among the first things that they could do, whereas on the contrary they were about the last to be rendered with truth and freedom by the greatest painters. This was probably because rocks bored them; they thought they could do them at any time, and were more interested with the figures, draperies, and action. Leonardo da Vinci's rocks, for example, are of no use to any one, nor yet for the matter of that is any part of his landscape—what little there is of it. Holbein's strong hand falls nerveless before a rock or mountain side, and even Marco Basaiti, whose landscape has hardly been sur-

## Ex Voto

passed by Giovanni Bellini himself, could not treat a rock as he treated other natural objects. As for Giovanni Bellini, I do not at this moment remember to have seen him ever attempt a bit of slate, or hard, grey, gritty, sandstone rock. This is not so with Gaudenzio, his rocks in the Magi chapel, and again in several compartments of his fresco in the church of S. Maria delle Grazie, at the foot of the mountain, are as good as rocks need ever be. The earliest really good rocks I know are in the small Entombment by Roger Van der Weyden in our own National Gallery.

Returning to the terra-cotta figures in the Magi chapel, there is nothing about them to find fault with, but they do not arouse the same enthusiasm as the frescoes. They too are sufferers by damp and lapse of time, and a painted terra-cotta figure does not lend itself to a dignified decay. The *disjecti membra poetae* are hard to recognize if painted terra-cotta is the medium through which inspiration has been communicated to the outer world. Outside the Magi chapel, invisible by the Magi, and under a small glazed lantern which lights the St. Joseph with the Virgin adoring the Infant Saviour, and the Presepio, hangs the star. It is very pretty where it is, but its absence from the chapel itself is, I think, on the whole, regrettable. I have been sometimes tempted to think that it originally hung on the wall by a hook which still remains near the door through which the figures must pass, but think it more probable that this hook was used to fasten the string of a curtain that was hung over the window.

In conclusion, I should say that Colombo says that the figures being short of the prescribed number were completed by Fermo Stella. Bordiga gives the horses only to this artist.

## *Il Presepio*

### *Chapel No. 6. Il Presepio*

This is more a grotto than a chapel, and was declared in an inscription set up by Bernardino Caimi in letters of gold to be "the exact counterpart of the one at Bethlehem in which the Virgin gave birth to her Divine Son." Bordiga writes of this inscription as still visible, but I have repeatedly looked for it without success.

If Caimi, as Fassola distinctly says, had the above inscription set up, it is plain that this, and perhaps the Shepherds' chapel hard by, were among the very earliest chapels undertaken. This is rendered probable by the statement of Fassola that the shell of the Circumcision chapel which adjoins the ones we are now considering was built "dalli principij del Sacro Monte." He says that this fact is known by the testimony of certain contemporaneous painters ("il che s' argumenta dalli Pittori che furono di que' tempi"). Clearly, then, the Presepio, Shepherds, and Circumcision chapels were in existence some years before the Magi chapel was begun. I cannot say whether Gaudenzio made the figures before Bernardino Caimi died. It is more likely that the grotto was originally without figures, and that these were added by Gaudenzio later on; they were probably among his first works. The place is so dark that they cannot be well seen, but about noon the sun comes down a narrow staircase and they can be made out very well for a quarter of an hour or so; they are then seen to be very good. They have no fresco background, nor yet is there any to the Shepherds' chapel, which confirms me in thinking these to have been among the earliest works undertaken. Colombo says that the infant Christ in the Presepio is not by Gaudenzio, the original figure having been stolen by some foreigner not many years ago, and Battista, the excellent Custode

## *Ex Voto*

of the Sacro Monte, assures me that this was the second time the infant had been stolen.

### *Chapel No. 7. Visit of the Shepherds*

Some of the figures—the Virgin, one shepherd, and four little angels—in this chapel are believed to be by Gaudenzio, and if they are, they are probably among his first essays, but they are lighted from above, and the spectator looks down on them, so that the dust shows, and they can hardly be fairly judged. The hindmost shepherd—the one with his hand to his heart and looking up, is the finest figure; the Virgin herself is also very good, but she wants washing.

If Fassola and Torrotti are to be believed,<sup>1</sup> and I am afraid I must own that, much as I like them, I find them a little credulous, the Virgin in this chapel is more remarkable than she appears at first sight; she used originally to have her face turned in admiration towards the infant Christ, but at the very first moment that she heard the bells begin to ring for the elevation of Pope Innocent the Tenth to the popedom, she turned round to the pilgrims visiting the place, in token of approbation; the authorities, not knowing what to make of such behaviour, had her set right, but she turned round

<sup>1</sup> Their words run thus: “Il volto di quella Vergine Maria mirava altre volte al Bambino Giesù, mà dall’ anno, il giorno, ed hora, che fù creato Pontefice Innocenzo X al suono di Campane miracolosamente si voltò alli Visitanti. Dicono alcuni, che prima ancora staua riuoltata al Popolo, e che accommodata, non accorgendosi del miracolo in detto giorno, poi lo diede a conoscere” (Fassola, p. 86).

“Si dice che la Vergine mirava il Bambino, e quando si sonarono le campane per l’esaltazione d’Innocenzo X, tornò il volto ai Visitanti, che racconciata nuovamente voltollo al popolo come invitante” (Torrotti, p. 70).

## *Circumcision*

a second time with a most gracious smile and assumed the position which the elevation of no later Pope has been ever able to disturb. Pope Innocent X was not exactly the kind of Pope whom one would have expected the Virgin to greet with such extraordinary condescension. If it had been the present amiable and venerable Pontiff there would have been less to wonder at.

*Chapel No. 8. Called by Fassola and Torrotti the Circumcision, and by Bordiga the Purification*

Tibaldi gives this chapel as already made but proposes to change the name from the Circumcision to the Purification. The walls are among the very oldest on the Sacro Monte, but the terra-cotta figures and the frescoes are given by Fassola, Torrotti, and Bordiga, I should say incorrectly, to Fermo Stella. The frescoes remind me more of Lanini, and are quite unlike the signed work by Fermo Stella at Varallo. They are, however, in but poor preservation, and no very definite opinion can be formed concerning them. The terra-cotta work is, I think, also too free for Fermo Stella. The infant Jesus is very pretty, and the Virgin would also be a good figure if she was not spoiled by the wig and over-much paint which restorers have doubtless got to answer for. The other two figures are greatly inferior. The work is mentioned in the 1586 edition of Caccia as completed, but there is nothing to show whether or no it was a restoration. I have long thought I detected a certain sub-Flemish feeling in both the Virgin and Child, and though aware that I have very little grounds for doing so, am inclined to think that Tabachetti must have had something to do with them, though the folds of the drapery are hardly up to Tabachetti's level. Bordiga is clearly wrong in calling the

## *Ex Voto*

chapel a Purification. There are no doves, and there must always be doves for a Purification. Besides, there was till lately a knife ready for use lying on the table, as shown in Guidetti's illustration of the chapel.

If this chapel has not been refilled with figures since Tibaldi's time, then, seeing that they are of terra-cotta, they may possibly belong to the Gaudenzian period, but I can come to no conclusion. Since my first edition was published, an enormous knife big enough to kill a bullock has been laid upon the table. There must have been some mistake; the person who was commissioned to get it must have thought it was wanted for the Massacre of the Innocents chapel. It could not be safely used professionally for any animal smaller than a rhinoceros. When people saw what had been bought, they said "Ciau" several times, put it upon the table, and went away.

### *Chapel No. 9. Joseph Warned to Fly*

This chapel is described as completed in the 1586 edition of Caccia, but from Tibaldi's notes we find that the walls alone, "but not the figures," were completed when he made his plan in 1570. The figures, which are stucco, are again given to Fermo Stella by Bordiga, but not by either Fassola or Torrotti. I am again unable to think that Bordiga is right. There is again, also, a sub-Flemish feeling in the sculptured work which is difficult to account for. The angel is a fine figure, and the heads of the Virgin and Child are also excellent. There is no evidence to show that these figures are early works of Tabachetti, and that the sleeping St. Joseph is a first attempt at the figure which he succeeded later so admirably in rendering, but the work comprises much that is good, though the draperies are not remark-

## *Flight into Egypt*

able. The figures have suffered deplorably from thick coats of shiny paint.

### *Chapel No. 10. The Flight into Egypt*

The octangular walls of this chapel had been made in Tibaldi's time, but not the figures. The walls were intended for (but never contained) the Massacre of the Innocents. It is mentioned as completed in the 1586 edition of Caccia, who expressly says it is of octangular form, as indeed we see it. Bordiga says "the figures seem to be by Stella"; they are not very good, but the chapel has, or had in Fassola's time, other merits perhaps even of greater than artistic value, for he says it is particularly useful to those who have lost anything. "Perditori di qualche cosa" are more especial recipients of grace in consequence of devotion at this particular chapel. The flight is conducted as leisurely as Flights into Egypt invariably are. The figures are all of stucco, and though the infant Christ is rather pretty the work cannot be commended.

### *Chapel No. 11. Massacre of the Innocents*

This is one of the most remarkable chapels on the Sacro Monte, and also one of the most abounding in difficult problems. It was built with funds provided by Carlo Emanuele I, Duke of Savoy, about the year 1586, and took four years to complete. In the 1586-7 edition of Caccia the chapel itself is alone given as completed. In the 1590-1 edition it is said that both the sculptures and the frescoes were now finished, and that they are all "bellissime e ben fatti" [*sic*]. This is confirmed by an inscription on the collar of a soldier who stands near Herod's right hand, and which seems, though probably

## *Ex Voto*

fallaciously, as if it were intended to govern the whole of the terra-cotta work. The inscription runs:

“ Michel Ang. RSTI [Rossetti] Scul: Da Claino MDXC Etate an. VIII.”

This exactly tallies with the dates given in the two editions of Caccia.

The date is thus satisfactorily established, but the authorship of the work is less easily settled. All the authorities without exception say that the sculptor was a certain Giacomo Bargnola of Valsolda, who was also called Bologna. Fassola describes him as a “*statuario virtuosissimo e glorioso per tutta l' Europa,*” and Torrotti calls him “*il famoso Giacomo Bargnola di Valsoldo [sic] soprannominato Bologna.*” All subsequent writers have repeated this.

At Varallo itself I found nothing known about either Bargnola or Valsolda, but turning to Zani find Bargnola under the name Paracca. Zani says, “*Paracca, non Peracca, nè Perracca, nè Perrazza, Giannantonio, o Giacomo, detto il Valsoldo, Valsolino, e il Valsoldino, non Valfondino, ed anche il Bargnola, e malamente Antonio Valsado Parravalda.*” He says that he was a “*plastico*” and restorer of statues, came from the neighbourhood of Como, was “*bravissimo,*” and lived from about 1557 to 1587. There was a Luigi Paracca from the same place who was also called “*Il Valsoldino,*” and a Giacomo, and an Andrea, but of these last three he does not say that they were noteworthy.

Nagler mentions only a Giovanni Antonio Paracca, who he says was called Valsolda. He says that he was a sculptor of Milan, who made a reputation at Rome about 1580 as a restorer of antique statues; that he only worked in order to get money to spend on debauchery,



## *Massacre of the Innocents*

and died, according to Baglione, young, and in a hospital. His words are:

“Paracca, Gio. Antonio gennant Valsoldo, Bildhauer von Mailand, machte sich um 1580 in Rom als Restaurator antiker Werke einen Namen, arbeitete aber nur, um Geld zur Schwelgerei zu bekommen. Starb jung im Hospital wie Baglione versichert.”

I have had Baglione before me, but can find no life of Paracca either under that name or under that of Bargnola, and suppose the reference to him must be incidental in the life of some other artist. I will again gratefully accept a fuller reference. I do not believe a word about Paracca's alleged debauchery. Who ever yet worked as Nagler says?

We have, then, to face on the one hand the authority of all writers about the Sacro Monte, and on the other, the exceedingly explicit claim made by Rossetti himself in the inscription given above to at any rate part of the work. Probably Bargnola began the work and Rossetti finished it.

The question resolves itself, therefore, into how much he did, and how soon Rossetti took the work over. It must be remembered that Michel Angelo Rossetti is a name absolutely unknown to us. Zani, Nagler, Cicognara, Lübke, Perkins, and all the authorities I have consulted omit to mention him. I find abundant reference to three, and indeed five, painters who were called Rossetti, two of whom—doubtless nephews of Michel Angelo Rossetti,—did the frescoes in this very chapel we are considering, but no one says one syllable about any Michel Angelo Rossetti, and it is a bold thing to suppose that an unknown man should have succeeded so admirably with such a very important work as the Massacre of the Innocents chapel, and have lived as the inscription shows to the age at least of fifty-seven with-

## Ex Voto

out leaving a single trace in any other quarter whatever. The work, at any rate in many parts, is that of one who has been working in clay all his life, and was a thorough master of his craft, and this makes it all the more difficult to suppose it to be a single *tour de force*. On the other hand, such *tours de force* were not uncommon among mediæval Italian workmen. Gaudenzio Ferrari's work in sculpture is little else than a succession of *tours de force*, and in other parts of the work we are now considering there is a certain archaism which suggests growing rather than matured power. On the whole, however, I conclude that Paracca did the figures nearer the spectator, and, in fact, a full three-fourths of the work, but that Rossetti did the remaining figures, which are to be found principally in the background, and signed one of these as thinking Paracca's share too well known to admit of its being supposed that he was claiming the whole work. Signor Arienta tells me he has found a Castel Claino (doubtless the place referred to by Rossetti in the inscription given above) mentioned in an old document, as formerly existing near Milan.

Proceeding to a consideration of the frescoes, we find that two of Herod's body-guard, standing on his left hand, and corresponding to the one on his right, on whose collar the sculptor signed his name, have also signatures on their collars, obviously done in concert with the sculptor. The signatures are as follows:

“ Battista Roveri Pictor Milane Æta xxxv ”

and

“ Io Mauro Rover Pictor.”

Fassola says that the painter of the chapel was “ il Fiamenghino.” If he had said the painters were “ i Fiamenghini ” he would have been right, for Signor



THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS



## *Massacre of the Innocents*

Arienta called my attention to a passage in Lanzi, in which he has dealt with three painters bearing the name of Rovere, two of whom, if not all three, were called "i Fiamenghini." The three were Giovanni Mauro, Giambattista, and Marco, which last painter does not seem to have had anything to do with the Massacre of the Innocents. Lanzi calls Gio. Mauro a follower, first of Camillo, and then of Giulio Cesare Procaccini. He describes them as painters of great facility and invention, but as seldom taking pains to do what they very well might have done, if they had chosen; and his verdict is, I should say, about right. He adds:

"I find them also called Rossetti, and they are still more often described as 'i Fiamenghini,' their father, Richard, having come from Flanders, and settled in Milan."

Signor Arienta explained to me that it was through this surname of Fiamenghini, by which the brothers Rovere were known, that Giovanni Miel d'Anvers was supposed to have had any hand in the frescoes on the Sacro Monte. This last-named painter was court painter to Carlo Emanuele I. Bordiga knew this, and seeing he came from Antwerp, concluded that he must be "il Fiamenghino" mentioned, and all subsequent writers have followed him.

Some twenty years or so later these same two painters signed some frescoes at Orta as follows:

"Io Battista, et Io Maurus Aruberius, dicti Fiamenghini, pinxerunt anno 1608 die 9 Octobris."

They did a good deal of work at Orta, but none that I can see to be of much value.

Doubtless their mother's name was Rossetti, and the Michel Angelo RSTI who claims the sculptured work, and was some twenty years their senior, was their uncle.

## *Ex Voto*

Signor Arienta also told me that one of the figures in the frescoes of the Massacre of the Innocents chapel is wearing a collar with a clasp on which there is an oak-tree, for which "Rovere" is the Italian, and that he holds this figure to have been a portrait of the painter.

Fassola says that under the glazed aperture which is in front of the piece there is placed a small terra-cotta car drawn by a child and loaded with a head, or ear, of maize, a goose, and a clown; he explains that the maize means 1000, the car 400, the clown 90, and the goose 4, which numbers taken together make the number of infants that were killed. He adds that there is another like hieroglyphic, which, as it is not very important, he will pass over. I find no mention of this in Torrotti, nor yet in Bordiga, but when people call attention to a thing and then say nothing about it, I generally find they have a reason. On a recent visit to Varallo I examined the two hieroglyphs; the second is also a small terra-cotta car or cart drawn by a child, and containing the bust of a monk, a die, and two or three other things that I could not make out. The treatment of these two hieroglyphics alone is enough to show that they were done by a thorough master of his craft. No doubt the import of the second hieroglyph was known by Fassola to be sinister, but I must leave its interpretation to others. He adds that the graces vouchsafed at this chapel are chiefly on behalf of sick children.

I may conclude by saying that though nothing has been taken directly from Tabachetti's Journey to Calvary chapel, the sculptor, whoever he was, has nevertheless plainly felt the influence, and been animated by the spirit of that great work, then just completed.

WE NOW BEGIN THE CHAPELS THAT deal with Christ's Manhood, Ministry, and Passion.

*Chapel No. 12. The Baptism of Christ*

Tibaldi says this subject was to replace the Journey to Calvary in the then Chiesa Nera; but the Temptation, as we have seen, was put there instead. The Flight into Egypt was to occupy the site of the present Baptism chapel. The statues—all of them stucco—are poor and of unknown authorship. The chapel is mentioned as completed on its present site in the 1586 edition of Caccia, and the water of the fountain was to be brought there shortly so as to imitate the Jordan. This was done, but the water made the chapel so damp that it was turned off again. The graces are chiefly for married ladies.

*Chapel No. 13. Temptation*

This chapel is given as completed in the 1586 edition of Caccia, clearly on its present site—the existing figures having by that date been substituted for the original Journey to Calvary, as already explained. Tibaldi says the Temptation chapel was to be made on the site of the present Woman of Samaria chapel, but it can never have been on that site and I cannot doubt was always where it is now. The figures both of Christ and of the devil are of stucco, and their draperies are in great part real linen or calico. The animals are terra-cotta and it seems probable that these alone are by Tabachetti. The devil is a respectable-looking old Jewish Rabbi. I should say he was the

## *Ex Voto*

leading solicitor in some such town as Samaria, and that he gave an annual tea to the choir. He is offering Christ some stones just as any other respectable person might do, and if it were not for his two clawed feet there would be nothing to betray his real nature. The beasts with their young are excellent. The porcupine has real quills. The fresco background is by Melchior D'Enrico, and here the fall of the devil when the whole is over is treated with an unreserve little likely to be repeated. He is dreadfully unwell. The graces in this chapel are more especially for people who are bewitched and for those who are in any wise troubled in mind, body, or estate.

Bordiga says that the chapel was begun about 1580, and completed in 1594, but in the portico there is an inscription painted by order of the Bishop, and forbidding visitors to deface the walls, that is dated 1524, and the back of the chapel has names scratched upon it as early as 1504.

### *Chapel No. 14. The Woman of Samaria*

This small chapel is given as recently completed in the 1586 edition of Caccia, so that Bordiga and Cusa are wrong in dating it 1598. Tibaldi gives it as contemplated but not yet made. In the poetical part of Caccia it is described as "in un tempiello che di nuovo e fatto." It is no doubt the original chapel in its original position. The woman of Samaria is a fine buxom figure, but has been so much repainted that it is hardly fair to judge the work at all. She is of stucco, but whether Tabachetti had any hand in the figure or no cannot be determined. Nor yet do we know whether any material change was made in 1689 when certain "benefattori di Roma" did something to the work. I see from a note that





THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS



## *Paralytic*

can only be read from inside the chapel, that the chapel was restored on 4th July 1715 by a certain Pietro Gio. Nartessi (?), and from another note that it was again restored by Giacomo Bocciolone and Antonio Chiara in 1821. The figures have been repainted since then, and the horse-hair wig on the female figure has been put on anyhow. Again I would ask, What chance would even the Venus of Milo have against such treatment as this? The frescoes are without interest. The graces at this chapel are chiefly for women who wanted to abandon some evil practice, and for rain when the country was suffering from long drought. This last is because Christ said to the woman of Samaria, "Give me to drink."

### *Chapel No. 15. The Paralytic*

Tibaldi gives this chapel as merely contemplated.

The chapel alone was completed by 1586 or 1590. The statues are said to be by D'Enrico, whom we meet here for the first time. Bordiga praises them very highly, but neither Jones nor I liked the composition as much as we should have wished to have done. Some of the individual figures are good, especially a man with his arm in a sling, and two men conversing on the left of the composition, but there is too little concerted and united action, and too much attempt to show off each individual figure to the best advantage. Bordiga says that the frescoes were completed in 1624. These are chiefly, if not entirely, by Cristoforo Martinolo, a Valsesian artist and pupil of Morazzone, who, according to Bordiga, though little known, has here shown himself no common artist. Again neither Jones nor I admired them as much as we should have been glad to do. "All infirmities of fever, and paralysis," says Fassola, "if

## *Ex Voto*

recommended to the Great Saviour at this place will be dissipated, as may be gathered from the many *voti* here exhibited.”

### *Chapel No. 16. The Widow's Son at Nain*

This chapel, again, was only contemplated when Tibaldi made his plan, and the walls are alone mentioned as completed in 1590. So that Bordiga and Cusa are again wrong in saying that the frescoes were painted about 1580. The work is given as completed in Revelli's guide of 1606. It is not good, and we have here a return to stucco, all the figures being in this material. The walls were probably raised soon after 1580. Donna Mathilde di Savoia, Marchesa di Pianezza, a natural daughter of Carlo Emanuele I, was among the principal contributors. The graces were “for those who had had bad falls or any accidents whereby they had been rendered speechless, stupid, senseless, and apparently dead.”

It will be observed on referring to the plan facing p. 58, that this chapel is given as on the ground now occupied by Christ taken before Annas, and faces the Herod chapel on the Piazza dei Tribunali. This may be a mere error in the plan, but the plan is generally accurate, and it is very likely that a change was made in the middle of the last century when the Annas chapel was built.

### *Chapel No. 17. The Transfiguration*

This is on the highest ground of the Sacro Monte, the Transfiguration being supposed to have happened on Mount Sinai. Inside the chapel they have made Mount Sinai, but Fassola says that it was originally

## *Transfiguration*

quite too high, and the Fabbricieri had ordered it to be made lower, "so as to render it more enjoyable by the eye." It was begun at the end of the sixteenth century, but is mentioned as being only "founded" in the 1586 and 1590 editions of Caccia, and the work seems to have got little further than the foundations, until in 1660 it was resumed; Fassola, writing in 1671, says that the chapel was "levata in alto da terra l'anno del mille, sei cento e sessanta," or about ten years before his book appeared; it was still in great part unpainted, and he makes an appeal to his readers to contribute towards its completion. From both Fassola and Torrotti it would appear that only the group of figures on the mountain was in existence when they wrote. They both of them make the extraordinary statement that these figures are by Giovanni D'Enrico, whom they must have perfectly well known to have been dead more than a quarter of a century before Fassola wrote, and many years before the figures could possibly have been placed where they now are. It is much as though I, writing now, were to ascribe Boehm's statue of Mr. Darwin, in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington, to Chantrey. The figures on the mountain are among the worst on the Sacro Monte. I see that Cusa ascribes the figures of Peter, James, and John only to D'Enrico, but the ascription is very difficult to understand.

Bordiga does not say who did the figures of Peter, James, and John, but he gives the Christ, Moses, and Elias to Pietro Francesco Petera of Varallo. The fourteen figures at the foot of the mountain he assigns to Gaudenzio Soldo of Camasco, a pupil of the sculptor Dionigi Bussola. In 1665 Giuseppe and Stefano Danedi, called Montalti, and pupils of Morazzone, "painted the cupola of the chapel with innumerable angels great and small exhibiting the most varied movements." Giuseppe

## *Ex Voto*

had the greater share in this work, in which may be seen, according to Bordiga, signs of the influence of Guido, under whom Giuseppe had studied.

Among the figures below the mountain there is a blind man, and a boy with a bad foot leading him—both good—and a contemptuous father telling the Apostles that they cannot cure his son, and that he had told them so from the first, but the paint is peeling off the figures so much that the work can hardly be judged fairly. When photographed they look much better, and Signor Pizzetta tells me he was recently commissioned to photograph the boy, who is in a fit of hystero-epilepsy, for a medical work that was being published in France, so it is probably very true to nature.

### *Chapel No. 18. Raising of Lazarus*

Tibaldi's plan shows this chapel as contemplated for the site then occupied by the Capture—which we see was not at that time in the house near the smaller gate. Fassola says it was erected at the expense of Pomponio Bosso, a noble Milanese, between the years 1560 and 1580. It is mentioned as completed in the 1586 edition of Caccia, and was probably finished before Tabachetti came. Bordiga only says it was finished in 1582. The statues (all stucco but two) are of no interest, nor yet the frescoes. I observe that in Caccia the "tempio" is praised but not, apparently, its contents. The sculptured figures are ascribed by Bordiga to Ravello, and the frescoes to Testa, whose brother-in-law, Lorenzo Testa, was Fabbriciere at the time the chapel was erected. The two terra-cotta figures are the one nearest the window to the left and the lively little man with his mouth open, also to the left of the composition. I have no idea where these figures came from, but they were

## *Last Supper*

probably taken from some abandoned chapel. All the figures have been much restored, the new stucco and new paint peeling off the old, and the older, stronger work appearing underneath. They are probably by the same man who did the Flight into Egypt and the Entry into Jerusalem.

### *Chapel No. 19. Entry into Jerusalem*

The figures in this chapel are ascribed to Giovanni D'Enrico by both Fassola and Torrotti, an ascription very properly set aside by Bordiga, for the sculptured figures are mentioned as finished in the 1586 edition of Caccia. They are hardly better than those in the preceding chapel. One or two are badly baked terracotta. The rest are stucco, some being simply brick pilasters cased over with stucco and painted. The landscape part of the background is by one of the brothers Rovere, named, as I have said, Fiamenghini, and he has introduced a house with a stepped gable like those at Antwerp.

### *Chapel No. 20. The Last Supper*

This was one of the earliest chapels, the figures being of wood, stiff and lifeless. The supper is profuse, and of much later date than the figures. I believe, but cannot speak positively, that this scene originally stood in what became afterwards the Sacristia of the Chiesa Vecchia. The Sacristia and the fresco painted by Lanini as background (I suppose for the present figures) have been preserved, but the church itself was removed at the end of the last century to make room for the "casa degli esercizi" of the priests. The old Sacristia has been turned into the Archivio of the Sacro Monte.

## Ex Voto

The Casa degli esercizi is now let out in lodgings during the summer months, and a delightful place it must be to stay at. Torrotti, writing in 1686, says that a reconstruction of the Cena chapel was intended, but that Lanini's fresco was not to be touched. This is not immediately reconcilable with the fact that in the plan of 1671 the Cena appears to have been already moved to its present site, for this being so, it is not apparent how Lanini's frescoes behind the Chiesa Vecchia could be in jeopardy. The Apostles have real napkins round their shoulders.

After the Cena, Tibaldi proposed to make another chapel to represent Christ washing the disciples' feet.

### *Chapel No. 21. The Agony in the Garden*

Tibaldi takes no note of the older chapel, which indisputably existed, and says that an Agony in the Garden chapel was to be made, with the Sleeping Disciples, in an adjacent chapel. The original chapel, according to Bordiga, was apart from the others at the foot of the neighbouring *monticello*, meaning, presumably, the height on which the Transfiguration chapel now stands. It was at this old chapel that S. Carlo used to spend hours in prayer. It was one of the earliest, and the figures were of wood. Fassola says that it was the angel offering the cup to Christ in the old chapel who announced his approaching end to S. Carlo, but the figures had been removed in his time as they were perishing, and terra-cotta ones by Giovanni D'Enrico had been substituted, with a fresco background by his brother Melchiorre. This background perished during a reconstruction some twenty years ago. The graces at this chapel are thus described by Fassola:

“ Il moderno e Christo ed Angiolo nel medemo stato



## *Sleeping Apostles*

rinouati non sono meno miraculosi, perche tutti li concorrenti, bisognosi di pazienza di soffrire trauagli, malattie, ed ogni sorte d' infermità tanto dell' anima, quanto del corpo caldamente raccomandandosi al piacere di questo sudante Christo riportano ciò che meglio per lo stato di questo, ed altro Mondo fa di necessità alle loro persone."

I find no mention of any original fresco background, though I do of the one added afterwards by Melchiorre D' Enrico, now no longer in existence. As this was one of the earliest chapels, I incline to think that there was no fresco background in the first instance.

### *Chapel No. 22. The Sleeping Apostles*

Fassola says that this chapel was decorated about fifty years (really fifty-nine) before the date at which he was writing, by Melchiorre D' Enrico. It was then on its present site, but the end of the Cena block was rebuilt some twenty years ago. The present Custode, Battista, tells me he worked at the rebuilding, and taking me upstairs showed me a trace or two of Melchiorre's background. The sleeping Apostles are said to be by Giovanni D' Enrico; they will not bear comparison with Tabachetti's St. Joseph. The benefactor was Count Pio Giacomo Fassola di Rassa, a collateral ancestor of the historian. People who have become lethargic in their self-indulgence, or who are blinded through some bad habit, will find relief at this chapel. I have met with nothing to show that there was any earlier chapel with the same subject, and in the 1586 edition of Caccia it is expressly mentioned as one of those that as yet were merely contemplated, though the Agony in the Garden itself is described as completed, the older chapel already referred to being probably intended.

WE NOW COME TO THE BLOCK OF several chapels comprised in a building originally designed by Tibaldi at the instance of the Marchese d'Adda, but not carried out according to his design, and called "The Palace of Pilate." This work was begun about 1590, and according to Fassola was not completed till 1660. The figures, however, must have been most of them placed by 1644, for they are mainly by Giovanni D'Enrico, who is believed to have died in that year. The first of these chapels—the Capture of Christ—and probably several others, comprise some figures taken from earlier chapels. Fassola says that before this building was erected, the old portico built by Milano Scarrognini stood in the Piazza in front of the Holy Sepulchre, that "in its circuit of three hundred paces it comprised several mysteries of the passion." It is impossible to determine with even an approach to certainty what these chapels were, if, indeed, there were any at all, for Fassola is often wrong.

*Chapel No. 23. The Capture of Christ*

This chapel is in the Palazzo di Pilato block, though not strictly a suffering under Pontius Pilate. The greater number of the sixteen figures that it contains are old, and of wood, and among these are the figures of Christ, Judas, and Malchus, who is lying on the ground. To show how dust and dirt accumulate in the course of centuries, I may say that Cav. Prof. Antonini told me he had himself unburied one figure near the right hand wall, which he found more than half covered with earth. We have seen that there are also two figures introduced here which had no connection with the original chapel, I mean the old Adam and Eve, who are

## *Capture of Christ*

now doing duty as Roman soldiers. The few remaining figures that are not of wood are given to D'Enrico, and the frescoes are by his brother Melchiorre, but I think the most prominent soldier menacing Christ is by Tabachetti, and wonder that I failed to perceive this when writing my first edition. The fact that we have a figure by him inclines me to think that the present chapel was arranged with the assistance of Tabachetti at the time of his visit to Varallo in 1610, when the *Ecce Homo* chapel was being filled with figures, also with Tabachetti's assistance.

I have already explained that Fassola declares the original chapel to have been on the ground floor of the large house on the visitor's left as he enters the smaller entrance to the *Sacro Monte*.

Cusa gives the date of the removal as 1570, and if he is right we are enabled to date Tibaldi's plan as not earlier than 1570, for this shows the Capture chapel as in or near its present place. I cannot determine whether the *Palazzo di Pilato* was built round the Capture chapel as shown in Tibaldi's plan, or whether Tibaldi's chapel was pulled down; all I can say with confidence is that the figures were rearranged in 1610 with Tabachetti's assistance; that the old wooden figures, belonging to the pre-Gaudenzian era, are some of them far from bad; and that the present frescoes by Melchiorre D'Enrico, signed in a quasi-cipher, are dated 1619. They comprise a poor reminiscence of Stefano Scotto.

Nor again will I attack the question whether the original Capture chapel ever was where Fassola says it was or not. The frescoes taken to the *Pinacoteca* need not have formed the background to a Capture chapel. If, however, the Capture ever stood where Fassola says, there must have been two reconstructions; one prior to Tibaldi's plan, and another about 1610.

## *Ex Voto*

Of the former chapel Fassola says:

“On again descending where formerly was the Capture of Christ, and near the exit [from the Sacro Monte] we came to the porter's lodge. It should be noted that under the porter's room, in the place where the Capture used to be, there are most admirable frescoes by Gaudenzio” (p. 122).

With his accustomed reticence where he fears to give offence, he does not say that the frescoes are going to rack and ruin, but this is what he means; Torrotti expresses himself more freely, saying that a chapel, although derelict, containing paintings by Gaudenzio and his pupils, should not be left to the neglect of servants. These frescoes were removed a year or so ago to the Pinacoteca in the Museum. They are not by Gaudenzio, and are now rightly given to Lanini.

### *Chapel No. 24. Christ taken to Annas*

This is the one chapel that belongs to the eighteenth century, having been finished about 1765 at the expense of certain Valsesians residing in Turin. It does not belong to the Palazzo di Pilato block, but I deal with it here to avoid departure from the prescribed order. The design of the chapel is by Morondi, and the figures by Carlantonio Tandarini, except that of Annas, which is by Giambattista Bernesi of Turin. The frescoes are of the usual drop scene, *barocco*, academic kind, but where the damp has spared them they form an effective background. The figures want concert, and are too much spotted about so as each one to be seen to the best advantage. This, as Tabachetti very well knew, is not in the manner of living action, and the attempt to render it on these principles is doomed to failure; nevertheless many of Tandarini's individual figures are very





CAIAPHAS

## *Christ before Caiaphas*

clever, and have a good deal of a certain somewhat exaggerated force and character. I have already said that from the plan of 1671 "The Widow's Son" would seem to have been formerly on the site of the present Annas chapel.

### *Chapel No. 25. Christ taken before Caiaphas*

Cusa says that this chapel, which again is not in the Palazzo di Pilato block, adheres very closely to the design of Pellegrino Tibaldi. The figures, thirty-three in number, are commonly said to be by Giovanni D'Enrico and Giacomo Ferro, and the frescoes being dated 1642, we may think the terra-cotta work to be among the last done by D'Enrico on the Sacro Monte. If the figure of Caiaphas must be given to him, it is hard to see how it could have been more dramatically treated; but I have already said that I incline to think it is by Tabachetti. Caiaphas has stepped down from his throne, which is left vacant behind him, and is adjuring Jesus to say whether he is the Christ the Son of God. If it were not for the cobweb between the arm and the body, the photograph which is here given might almost pass as having been taken from life, and the character is so priest-like that it is hard to understand how priests could have tolerated it as they did.<sup>1</sup>

To the left of Caiaphas's empty throne are two standing figures, which look as if they had been begun for figures of Christ, but were condemned as not good enough. They may perhaps be intended for Joseph and

<sup>1</sup> The illustration given in the guide-book of 1640 clearly shows that at the time the cut was made the chapel was not yet completed. Caiaphas is sitting on his throne. There are several other apocryphal pictures of chapels that did not and do not exist, given in the same work.

## *Ex Voto*

Nicodemus. Some few of the other figures, which in all number thirty-three, are also full of character, but the greater part of them do not rise above the level of Giacomo Ferro's supers, and suffer from having lost much paint; nevertheless the chapel is effective, chiefly, doubtless, through the excellence of the Caiaphas himself, and if we could see the work as it was when D'Enrico left it we should doubtless find it more effective still.

The frescoes are by Cristoforo Martinolo, also named Rocca. They are not of remarkable excellence, but form an efficient background, and are among the best preserved on the Sacro Monte. They have also the great merit of being legibly signed and dated.

### *Chapel No. 26. The Repentance of St. Peter*

Hard by under a portico there is a statue of St. Peter, repentant, and over him there is a cock still crowing. The figure of St. Peter, and presumably that of the cock also, are by D'Enrico. I can find nothing about the date in any author.

This cock is said to have been the chief instrument in a miracle not less noteworthy than any recorded in connection with the Sacro Monte. It seems that on 3rd July 1653 a certain Lorenzo Togni from Buccioleto, who had been a martyr to intemperance for many years, came to the Sacro Monte in that state in which martyrs to intemperance must be expected generally to be. It was very early in the morning, but nevertheless the man was drunk, though still just able to go the round of the chapels. Nothing noticeable occurred till he got to the Caiaphas chapel, but here all on a sudden, to the amazement of the man himself, and of others who were standing near, a noise was heard to come from up aloft



## *Christ before Pilate*

in the St. Peter chapel, and it was seen that the cock had turned round and was flapping his wings with an expression of great severity. Before they had recovered from their surprise, the bird exclaimed in a loud voice, and with the utmost distinctness, "Ciocc' anch' anc'uei," running the first two words somewhat together, and dwelling long on the last syllable, which is sounded like a long French "eu" and a French "i." These words I am told mean, "Drunk again to-day also?" the "anc'uei" being a Piedmontese *patois* for "ancora oggi." The bird repeated these words three or four times over, and then turned round on its perch, to all appearance terra-cotta again. The effect produced upon the drunkard was such that he could never again be prevailed upon to touch wine, and ever since this chapel has been the one most resorted to by people who wish to give up drinking to excess.

The foregoing story is not given either in Fassola or Torrotti, but my informant, a most intelligent person, assured me that to this day the cocks about Varallo do not unfrequently say "Ciocc' anch' anc'uei"—indeed, I have repeatedly heard them do so with the most admirable distinctness. I am told that cocks sometimes challenge, and wish to fight, well-done cocks on crucifixes, but it is some way from this to the cock on the crucifix beginning to crow too. One does not see where this sort of thing is to end, and once terra-cotta always terra-cotta, is a maxim that a respectable figure would on the whole do well to lay to heart and abide by.

### *Chapel No. 27. Christ before Pilate*

There is no figure of superlative excellence in this chapel, but still it is one of D'Enrico's best works, and

## *Ex Voto*

the Pilate is the best of the four best-known Pilates—for there is a fifth, to which I will refer presently. The nineteen figures are generally ascribed to him; and, I should say there was less Giacomo Ferro in this chapel than in most of D'Enrico's. Possibly Giacomo Ferro was not yet D'Enrico's assistant. The frescoes are by Antonio, or Tanzio, D'Enrico, but I cannot see much in them to admire.

The date is given by Bordiga as about 1620, but no date is given either by Fassola or Torrotti. The nude figure to the left, seated and holding a spear near the spectator, is said to be a portrait of Tanzio, but Bordiga thinks that if we are to look for the portrait anywhere in this composition, we should do so in the open gallery above the gate of the Pretorium, where we shall find a figure that has nothing to do with the story, and represents a "jocund-looking" but venerable old man, wearing a hat with a white feather in it, and like the portrait of Melchiorre painted by himself in his Last Judgment—presumably the one outside the church at Riva Valdobbia. Bordiga adds that Melchiorre was still living in 1620, when Tanzio was at work on these frescoes.

### *Chapel No. 28. Christ before Herod*

Bordiga says that this chapel was begun in 1606, as shown by a letter from Monsignor Bescapè, Bishop of Novara, authorizing the Fabbricieri to appropriate three hundred *scudi* from the Mass chest for the purpose of erecting it, but it was not finished until 1638. The statues, thirty-five in number, are said to be by Giovanni D'Enrico, and the frescoes by Tanzio. We cannot date either accurately.

The figure of Herod is incomparably finer than any



HEROD



TWO LAUGHING BOYS IN THE HEROD CHAPEL

## *Christ taken back to Pilate*

others in the chapel, and I have already said that I incline to think it is by Tabachetti. Two laughing boys on Herod's left that are hardly seen till one is inside the chapel itself are also very good, but are hardly in Tabachetti's manner. Take each of the figures separately and few are good. As usual in D'Enrico's chapels, there is a deficiency of the *ensemble* and concert which no one except Tabachetti seems to have been able to give in sculptured groups containing many figures. Bordiga speaks of the frescoes in the highest terms, but I do not admire them as I should wish to do. They are generally considered as Antonio D'Enrico's finest work on the Sacro Monte.

The figures behind the two boys' heads coming very awkwardly in my photograph, my friend Mr. Gogin has kindly painted them out for me, so as to bring the boys' heads out better.

### *Chapel No. 29. Christ taken back to Pilate*

This is supposed to be the last work of Giovanni D'Enrico who, according to Durandi, died in 1644. The scene comprises twenty-three terra-cotta figures, few of them individually good, but nevertheless effective as a whole. One man, the nearest but one to the spectator, must be given to D'Enrico, and perhaps one or two more, but the greater number must have been done by Giacomo Ferro. The frescoes were begun both by Morazzone and Antonio D'Enrico; Fassola and Torrotti say that neither the one nor the other was able to complete the work, which in their time was still unfinished, but Doctor Morosini was going to get a really good man to finish them without further delay. Eventually the brothers Grandi of Milan came and did the Doric architecture, while Pietro Gianoli did some sibyls, and

## *Ex Voto*

on the facciata "il casto Giuseppe portato da due Angioli." Gianoli signed his work and dated it 1679. We know, then, that in this case the sculptured figures were placed some years before the background, as probably also with several other chapels; and it may be assumed that generally the terra-cotta figures preceded the background—which was designed for them, and not they for it—except in the case of Gaudenzio Ferrari, who probably conceived both the round and flat work together as part of the same design, and was thus the only artist on the Sacro Monte who carried out the design of uniting painting and sculpture in a single design, under the conditions which strictly it involves.

In connection with this chapel both Fassola and Torrotti say that D'Enrico has intentionally made Christ's face become smaller and smaller during each of these last scenes, as becoming contracted through increase of suffering. I have been unable to see that this is more than fancy on their parts.

It is also in connection with this chapel that we discover the true date of Fassola's book. He says that they had been on the look-out "during the whole of *last year*"—which he gives as 1669—for some one to finish the frescoes. "Now, however," he continues, "when this book is seeing light," etc. The book therefore should be seeing light in 1670. It is dated 1671. True, Fassola may have been writing at the very end of 1670, and the book may have been published at the beginning of 1671, but perhaps the more natural conclusion is that the same reasons which make publishers wish to misdate their books by a year now, made them wish to do so then, and that though Fassola's book appeared at the end of 1670, as would appear from his own words, it was nevertheless dated 1671.

## *Flagellation*

### *Chapel No. 30. The Flagellation*

Torrotti and Fassola say that the Christ in this chapel, as well as in all the others, is an actual portrait—and no doubt an admirable one—communicated by Divine inspiration to the many workmen and artists who worked on the Sacro Monte. This, they say, may be known from two documents contemporaneous with Christ himself, in which His personal appearance is fully set forth, and which seem almost to have been written from the statues now existing at Varallo. The worthy artists who made these statues were by no means given to historical investigations, and were little likely to know anything about the letters in question; besides, these had only just been discovered, so that there can have been no deception or illusion. Both Fassola and Torrotti give the letters in full, and to their pages the reader who wishes to see them may be referred.

The work is mentioned as completed in the 1586 edition of Caccia—this, and the Crowning with Thorns, being the only two that were completed of those that now form part of the Palazzo di Pilato block. Tibaldi shows neither chapel in his plan, but the fact that some of the figures are of wood shows that there was a very early Flagellation chapel somewhere on the Sacro Monte. Curiously enough, since my first edition Signor Arienta has rediscovered the original wooden figure of Christ in the possession of Prof. Busi of Varallo and Domo-dossola, and I understand Prof. Busi is about to place it in the Museum at Varallo. These two chapels do not in reality, however, belong to the Palazzo di Pilato at all; they existed long before it, and the new work was added on to them. Bordiga says that “an order of Monsignor Bescapè relating to this chapel, and dated 1st February 1605, shows that there was as yet no plan

## *Ex Voto*

of this part of the Palace of Pilate." I do not think the chapel has been much modified since 1586, beyond the fact that some one, perhaps Melchiorre D'Enrico, for we again meet with Stefano Scotto as in the Capture chapel, painted a new background.

Not only does the author of the 1586 Caccia mention the chapel, but he does it with more effusion than is usual with him. He rarely says anything in praise of any but the best work. I do not, therefore, think it likely that his words refer to the original wooden figures, two of which were preserved when the work was remodelled; these two mar the chapel now, and when all the work was of the same calibre it cannot have kindled any enthusiasm in a writer who appears to have known very fairly well which were the best chapels. He says:

“ Da manigoldi, in atto acerbo e fiero,  
Alla colonna Christo flagellato  
*Da scultor dotto assimigliato al vero*  
Di questo<sup>1</sup> in un de i lati è dimoſtrato,

E come fusse macerato e nero,  
D'aspri flagelli percosso, e vergato,  
Di Christo il sacro corpo in ogni parte,  
Vi ha sculto dotto maſtro in sott'il arte.”

I think the reconstruction of the chapel, then, and its assumption of its present state, except that a fresco background was added, should be assigned to some year about 1580-1585, and am disposed to ascribe, at any rate, the figure of the man who is binding Christ to the column to Tabachetti, who was then working on the Sacro Monte, and whose style the work seems to me to

<sup>1</sup> The projected Palazzo di Pilato block.







MAN IN BACKGROUND OF THE  
FLAGELLATION CHAPEL

## *Flagellation*

resemble more nearly than it does that of D'Enrico. Whoever the chapel is by, it was evidently in its present place and much admired in 1586; there could hardly, therefore, have been any occasion to reconstruct it, especially when so much other work was crying to be done, and when it had, in all probability, been once reconstructed already.

We have seen that D'Enrico was not born till about 1580, and on the whole, until external evidence shows him to have done the figures, I shall continue to think that at least one of them, and very possibly all except the two old wooden ones, are by Tabachetti. The foot of the man binding Christ to the column has crumbled away, either because the clay was bad, or from insufficient baking. This is why the figure is propped up with a piece of wood. [See illustration.] The damp has made the rope slack, so that the pulling action of the figure is in great measure destroyed, its effect being cancelled by its ineffectualness; but for this the reader will easily make due allowance. The same man reappears presently in the balcony of the Ecce Homo chapel, but he is there evidently done by another and much less vigorous hand.

The man in the foreground, who is stooping down and binding his rods, is the same as the one who is kicking Christ in Tabachetti's Journey to Calvary, and is one of those adopted by Tabachetti from Gaudenzio Ferrari's Crucifixion chapel; this figure may perhaps have been an addition by Giovanni d'Enrico, or have been done by an assistant, for it is hardly up to Tabachetti's mark. The two nearest scourgers are fine powerful figures, but I should admit that they remind me rather of D'Enrico than of Tabachetti, though they might also be very well by him, and probably are so.

Fassola says that the graces obtainable by the faithful

## *Ex Voto*

here have relation to every kind of need; they are in a high degree unspecialized, and that this freedom from specialization is characteristic of all the chapels of the Passion.

### *Chapel No. 31. The Crowning with Thorns*

Much that was said about the preceding chapel applies also to this. It is mentioned in the 1586 edition of Caccia as done "sottilmente in natural ritratto," and as being one of the few works that would form part of the Palazzo di Pilato block that were as yet completed.

That this chapel had undergone one reconstruction before 1586, we may gather from the fact that the left-hand wall is still covered with a fresco of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise; this has no connection with the Crowning with Thorns, and doubtless formed the background to the original Adam and Eve. I have already said that I am indebted to Signor Arienta for this suggestion. Bordiga calls this subject Christ being Led to be Crowned, and gives it to Crespi da Cerano, but I cannot understand how he can see in the work anything but an Expulsion from Paradise. The chapel having been reconstructed before 1586 on its present site—as it evidently had been—and being admired, is not likely to have been reconstructed a second time, and I am again, therefore, inclined to give the three principal figures to Tabachetti, and to reject the statements of Fassola, Torrotti, Bordiga, and Cusa, who all ascribe them to D'Enrico, who in 1586 was not probably more than five or six years old. The two men standing up behind Christ, one taunting Him, and the other laughing, are among the finest on the Sacro Monte, and are much more in Tabachetti's manner than in D'Enrico's. The other figures are, as they were



THE CROWNING WITH  
THORNS



## *Crowning with Thorns*

doubtless intended to be, of minor interest, and are probably by an assistant.

Some of the frescoes other than those above referred to, were added at a later date, and are said by Bordiga, on the authority of a covenant, dated 27th September 1608, to have been done by Antonio Rantio, who undertook to paint them for a sum of ten ducatoons. They are without interest.

It was here the Flemish dancer was healed. His name was Bartholomew Jacob, and he came from Graveling in Flanders. It seems there was a ball going on at the house of one of this man's ancestors, and that the Last Sacraments were being carried through the street under the windows of the ball-room. The dancing ought by rights to have been stopped, but the host refused to stop it, and presently the priest who was carrying the Sacrament found a paper under the chalice, written in a handwriting of almost superhuman neatness, presumably that of the Madonna herself, and bearing the words, "Dancer, thou wouldst not stay thy dance: I curse thee, therefore, that thou dance for nine generations." And so he did, he and all his descendants all their lives, till it came to Bartholomew Jacob, who was the ninth in descent. He too began life dancing, and was still dancing when he started on a pilgrimage to Rome; when, however, he got to the Sacro Monte at Varallo on 7th January 1646 he began to feel tired, tremulous, and languid from so much incessant movement. This strange feeling attacked him first at the Nativity chapel, but by the time he got to the Crowning with Thorns he could stand it no longer, and fell as one dead, to rise again presently perfectly whole, and relieved of his distressing complaint.

Personally I find this story interesting as giving high support to the theory I have been trying to insist upon

## *Ex Voto*

for some years past, and according to which in a certain sense a man is personally identical with all the generations in the direct line both of his ancestry and his descendants, as well as with himself. The words "Thou shalt dance for nine generations" involve one of the most important points contended for in my earlier book, *Life and Habit*. Fassola and Torrotti both say that more pilgrims left alms at this chapel than at any other. In fact they both seem to consider that this chapel did very well. "Qui," says Torrotti, "si colgano elemosine assai," and, as I have said already, it is here that a few autumn leaves of waxen images still linger.

A few weeks ago I saw the original document in which the story above given was attested. It was dated 1671, and signed, stamped, and sealed as a document of the highest importance. I noticed that in this manuscript, it was a voice that was heard, and not as in Fassola a letter that was found.

### *Chapel No. 32. Christ at the Steps of the Pretorium*

This is not mentioned by Tibaldi, nor in the 1586 edition of Caccia, nor yet in Revelli's guide of 1606. There was probably something here, but what I cannot determine. Fassola says that some of the frescoes, as well as of the statues, which, he says, are of wood, were by Gaudenzio. The other statues are given both by Fassola and Torrotti to D'Enrico, and the paintings to Gianoli, a wealthy Valsesian amateur who lived at Campertogno. Bordiga gives the statues to Ferro, already mentioned as a pupil of D'Enrico, but they are all of them terra-cotta, or possibly stucco, and too bad even for Giacomo Ferro. No traces of Gaudenzio's frescoes (if he ever painted any) remain. The chapel







ECCE HOMO

## *Ecce Homo*

seems to have been reconstructed in connection with the replica of the Scala Santa up which Christ is going to be conducted.

### *Chapel No. 33. Ecce Homo*

This is one of the finest chapels, the concert between the figures being better than in most of D'Enrico's other work, notwithstanding the fact that certainly two, and perhaps several, are old figures taken from a chapel or chapels that had nothing to do with the subject. I have already said that Tabachetti lent his assistance to the composition, and have explained my reasons for thinking that he has left us here a portrait of himself.<sup>1</sup>

The figures are thirty-seven in number, and are disposed in a spacious hall not wholly unlike the vestibule of the Reform Club, Christ and His immediate persecutors appearing in a balustraded balcony above a spacious portico that supports it. Here we find the Pilate which served D'Enrico as model for his own four Pilates. It is so considerably better than these that I think Tabachetti must have helped him. This must have been one of D'Enrico's first works on the Sacro Monte, the frescoes having been paid for on 7th December 1612, as shown by Morazzone's receipt which, I gather, is still in existence, and which is for the sum of 2400 *imperiali*. Of these frescoes it is impossible to speak highly; they look clever at first and from a distance, but do not bear closer attention. Morazzone took pains with the Journey to Calvary chapel, which was his first work on the Sacro Monte, but never did anything so good again.

Of the terra-cotta figures, the one to the extreme left is certainly by Gaudenzio Ferrari, being another

<sup>1</sup> [See p. 92.]

## *Ex Voto*

portrait, in nearly the same attitude, of the extreme figure to the left in the Crucifixion chapel. For reasons into which I will enter more fully when I come to this last-named work, I do not doubt that Stefano Scotto, Gaudenzio's master, is the person represented. I had to go inside the chapel to hold a sheet behind the figure in order to detach it from the background, so had myself taken along with it to show how it compares with a living figure. It is generally said at Varallo to be a portrait of Giovanni D'Enrico's brother Tanzio, but this is obviously impossible, for not only does the same person reappear in the Crucifixion chapel, but he is also found in Gaudenzio's early fresco of the Disputa in the S. Margherita chapel already referred to, in the large frescoes of 1513 in the church of S. Maria delle Grazie, where he appears as Pilate, and elsewhere, as I will presently show. I should be sorry to say that more than one other figure—the replica of the portrait of Leonardo da Vinci in the Crucifixion chapel, dealt with in chapter 9—is certainly by Gaudenzio, but am inclined to think that two or three others are also by him, the rest being probably all of them by D'Enrico or some assistant—with two, and perhaps more, by Tabachetti. Some—more especially two children, on the head of one of whom a man has laid his hand—are of great beauty. The child that is looking up is lovely; the other is not so good, but has suffered in re-painting, the eyelid being made too red; if this were remedied, as it easily might be, the figure would gain greatly. Cav. Prof. Antonini has very successfully substituted plaster hair for the horsehair, which had in great measure fallen off. The motive of this incidental group is repeated, but with less success, in Giovanni D'Enrico's Nailing to the Cross.

There is another child to the extreme right of the composition so commonly and poorly done that it is



STEFANO SCOTTO, AND  
MR. S. BUTLER



## *Ecce Homo*

hard to believe it can be by the same hand, but it is not likely that Giacomo Ferro had as yet become D' Enrico's assistant. The man who is pointing out Christ to this last-named child is far more seriously treated, and the head might very well be an importation from an earlier work. The finest figure after the one which I take to be Tabachetti's own portrait is that of a man already referred to in chapter 9 as probably also by Tabachetti, who is looking up and holding a staff in his hand; he stands against the wall to the spectator's right among the figures nearest to the grating. I should add that the floor of the chapel slopes a little up from the spectator like the stage in a theatre.

The dog in the middle foreground is hollow, as are all the figures, and shows a great hole on the side away from the spectator; it is not fixed to the ground, but stands on its own legs; it was as much as I could do to lift it. I am told the figures were baked down below in the town, and though they are most of them in several pieces, it must have been no light work carrying them up the mountain. I have been shown the remains of a furnace near the present church on the Sacro Monte, but believe it was only used for the figures made by Luigi Marchesi in 1826. I should, however, have thought that the figures would have been baked upon the Sacro Monte itself and not in the town.

Of this chapel Fassola says:

“All the pilgrims of every description come here, because it is at the top of the Scala Santa up which they go upon their knees, and there is plenty of room for pilgrims, as the chapel extends the whole width of the staircase. Those who are oppressed with travail, or fevers, or lawsuits, or unjust persecutions of any description, are comforted on being commended to this Christ.” “Vi sono qui,” says Torrotti, “pascoli deliziosi per i curiosi e più dotti.”

## *Ex Voto*

Some few pilgrims still go up the Scala Santa kneeling, but they do not commonly do so. The proper thing is to go up the stairs kneeling and kiss each step as you ascend. It must be a very painful, difficult thing to go up twenty-eight consecutive high steps on one's knees; I tried it, but gave it up after a very few steps, and do not recommend any of my readers to do even as much as this.

### *Chapel No. 34. Pilate Washing his Hands*

Fassola, Torrotti, and Bordiga all call this one of the best chapels, but neither Jones nor I could see that it was nearly so successful as the preceding. The seventeen modelled figures are by Giovanni D'Enrico, and the frescoes by his brother Antonio or Tanzio. One or two of the figures—especially a man putting his finger to his mouth derisively, are excellent, but the Pilate is a complete failure; and it is very difficult to think that it can have been done by the sculptor of the Caiaphas and Herod figures. Bordiga says that a contract was made with Caccia (not the historian), called Moncalvo, for the frescoes. This was the painter who did the backgrounds for the Crea chapels, but the contract was never carried out, probably because Antonio D'Enrico returned from Rome. It was dated November 1616, so that the terra-cotta figures probably belong to this year or to those that immediately preceded it.

### *Chapel No. 35. Christ Condemned to Death*

This is better than the preceding chapel, and contains some good individual figures. The statues are twenty-seven in number, and were modelled by D'Enrico prior



## *Christ Condemned to Death*

to the year 1614, in which year Morazzone was paid twelve hundred *imperiali* for having painted the frescoes, so that it was one of his earlier works, but the Pilate is again a failure. People who have been badly treated, and who have suffered from some injustice, are more especially recommended by Fassola "to try this Christ, who moves the pity of all who look upon Him." He continues that it was the intention to add some other chapels at the end of the portico of the Palazzo di Pilato, but this intention was not carried out. Bordiga calls attention to the view on the right, looking over Varallo and the Mastallone, as soon as the portico is passed.

THE PALAZZO DI PILATO IS NOW ENDED, and we begin with the mysteries of the Passion and Death of the Redeemer, the first of which is set forth in

*Chapel No. 36. The Journey to Calvary*

This, having regard to the terra-cotta figures alone, is by far the finest work on the Sacro Monte, and it is hardly too much to say that no one who has not seen it knows what sculpture can do. I have sufficiently shown that all the authorities, not one of whom has ever so much as seen a page of Caccia, are wrong by at least twenty years, when they say that Tabachetti completed the work in 1606. Bordiga refers, and this time I have no doubt accurately, to a deed drawn up in 1602, in accordance with which the fresco background was begun by Antonio Gandino, a painter of Brescia; this alone should have made Bordiga suspect that the terra-cotta work had been already completed, but he does not appear to have noted the fact, and goes on to say that the agreement with Gandino was cancelled by Bishop Bescapè in 1604, and that his work was destroyed, the chapel being handed over to Morazzone, who painted it in 1605, and was paid 1400 *lire*, besides twenty gold *scudi*. Morazzone has followed Gaudenzio boldly, repeating several of his fresco figures, as Tabachetti, with admirable good taste, had repeated several of his terra-cotta ones, while completely varying the action. The right-hand frescoes, and part of those on the wall opposite the spectator, have been recently cut away in squares, and relined, as the wall was perishing from damp.

The statues consist of about forty figures of men, women, and children, and nine horses, all of them full



TABACCHETTI'S JOURNEY TO CALVARY

General view to the right



## *Journey to Calvary*

life-size. They too have suffered from the effect of damp upon the paint; nevertheless, a more permanent and satisfactory kind of pigment has been used here than in most of the chapels; the work does not seem to have been much repainted since Tabachetti left it, but this is a matter on which it is very easy to be mistaken. One figure of a child in the foreground has disappeared, the marks of its feet and two little bits of rusty iron alone show where it was; the woman who was holding it also remains without an arm; both figure and arm, however, have been preserved. The work is one that will grow upon the reader the more he studies it, and should rank as the most successfully ambitious of mediaeval compositions in sculpture, no less surely than Gaudenzio's Crucifixion chapel, having regard to grandeur of scheme as well as execution, should rank as the most daring among Italian works of art in general. I am aware that this must strike many of my readers as in all probability a very exaggerated estimate, but can only repeat that I have studied these works for the last twenty years with every desire not to let a false impression run away with me, and that each successive visit to Varallo, while tending somewhat to lower my estimate of Giovanni D'Enrico, has increased my admiration for both Gaudenzio Ferrari and Tabachetti, as also, I would add, for the sculptor of the Massacre of the Innocents chapel.

It cannot, indeed, be pretended that Tabachetti's style is as pure as that of his great predecessor, but what it has lost in purity it has gained in freedom and vigour. It is not possible that a young artist working in the years 1580-1585 should present traces of the archaism which even the most advanced sculptors of half a century earlier had not wholly lost. The stronger a man is the more certainly will he be modified by his own times as well as modify them, and in an age of *barocco*

## Ex Voto

we must not look for Donatellos. Still, the more Tabachetti's work is examined the more will it be observed that he took no harm from the *barocco*, but kept its freedom while avoiding its coarseness and exaggeration. For reasons explained in an earlier chapter his figures are not generally portraits, but he is eminently realistic, and if he did the Vecchietto, of which I have given a photograph at the beginning of this book, and the figure which I take to be also his own portrait at an earlier age—not to mention the sleeping St. Joseph—he must be credited with some of the most living figures that have ever been made—figures that ride on the very highest crest of the wave, and neither admit possibility of further advance towards realism without defeating their own purpose, nor show even the slightest sign of decadence. Of the figure of the Countess of Serravalle, to which I have already referred, Torrotti said it was so much admired in his day that certain Venetian cavaliers offered to buy it for its weight in gold, but that the mere consideration of such an offer would be high treason (*lesa Maestà*) to the Sacro Monte. In the prose part of the 1586 edition of Caccia the work is thus described:

“Come N. S. è condotto alla morte con la croce alle spalle, qual si vede tutto di rilievo.”

The poetical account runs thus:

“Si trova poi in una Chiesa nera  
Con spettacolo fiero accompagnato  
Da soldati, e da gente molto fiera,  
Con la Croce alle spalle incaminato  
Christo Giesu in mezzo è l'empia schiera,  
Seguendolo Giovanni addolorato,  
Che di Giesu sostien la sconsolata  
Madre, da Maddalena accompagnata.”

## *Nailing to the Cross*

It seems, therefore, that the chapel had been painted black, as the earlier Journey to Calvary had been. From Caccia's use of the word "poi" it appears that this scene followed next after the Crowning with Thorns, which, before the Palazzo di Pilato was built, was the order in which Tabachetti's chapel would come. In the 1591 edition of Caccia we read:

"Come N.S. è condotto alla morte con la Croce sopra delle spalle, quali si vedeno tutto di rilieuo bellissi."

I have dealt sufficiently in chapter 9 with the seal on the back of the man who is beating back the Marys.

A Z scratched after baking can be seen on the upper part of the back of the young Roman officer with an eagle on his helmet. This was perhaps scratched by Tabachetti when he went inside the chapel to affix the seal already referred to. Perhaps the figure is the portrait of some friend whose name began with Z. Also I believe the soldier immediately behind the cross and next to Simon the Cyrenean is by Gaudenzio, and was taken by Tabachetti from the older Journey to Calvary. It too exactly resembles the corresponding figure in the Crucifixion chapel to be by Tabachetti.

Bordiga again calls attention to the extreme beauty of the view of Varallo that is to be had on leaving this chapel.

### *Chapel No. 37. The Nailing of Christ to the Cross*

This and the two following chapels are on the top of the small rise of some fifteen or twenty feet in which Bernardino Caimi is said to have seen a resemblance to Mount Calvary; they are approached by a staircase which leads directly to Giovanni D'Enrico's largest work.

## *Ex Voto*

Bordiga says that the chapel was begun in 1589 at the expense of Marchese Giacomo d'Adda; he probably, however, refers only to the building itself. It is not mentioned as even contemplated in the 1586 edition of Caccia, nor yet in Revelli's guide of 1606. From this last it would appear that though a chapel was to be made shortly in this neighbourhood, neither site nor subject had been as yet finally settled. It is not known when the terra-cotta work was begun, but it was not yet quite finished in 1644, when, as I have said, D'Enrico died.

The frescoes are by Melchiorre Gilardini, and have been sufficiently praised by other writers; they are fairly well preserved, and show, as in the preceding chapel and in Gaudenzio's Crucifixion, how much more is to be said for the union of painting and sculpture when both are in the hands of capable men, than we are apt to think. If the reader will divest the sculpture of its colour and background, how cold and uninteresting will it not seem in comparison even with its present somewhat impaired splendour. Looking at the really marvellous results that have been achieved, we cannot refrain from a passing regret at the spite that threw Tabachetti half a century off Gaudenzio, instead of letting them come together, but we must take these things as we find them.

On first seeing Giovanni D'Enrico's Nailing to the Cross we are tempted to think it even finer than the Journey to Calvary. The work is larger, comprising some twenty or so more terra-cotta figures—making about sixty in all—and ten horses, all of them full life-size, but the first impression soon wears off, and the arrangement is then felt to be artificial as compared with Tabachetti's. Tabachetti made a great point when, instead of keeping his floor flat or sloping it evenly up to any one side, he threw his stage up towards one



## *Nailing to the Cross*

corner, which is much higher than any other. The unevenness, and irregular unevenness, of the ground is of the greatest assistance to him, by giving him variety of plane, and hence a way of escaping monotony without further effort on his part. If D'Enrico had taken his ground down from the corner up to which Tabachetti had led it, he would have secured both continuity with Tabachetti's scene, and an irregularly uneven surface, without repeating his predecessor's arrangement. True, the procession was supposed to be at the top of Mount Calvary, but that is a detail. As it is, D'Enrico has copied Tabachetti in making his ground slope, but has made it slope more evenly along the whole width of the chapel, from the foreground to the wall at the back. The horses are arranged all round the walls, and the soldiers are all alongside of the horses, and every figure is so placed as to show itself to the greatest advantage. This perhaps is exaggeration, but there is enough truth in it to help the reader who is unfamiliar with this class of work to apprehend Tabachetti's superiority more readily than he might otherwise do in the short time that tourists commonly have at their disposal. The general impression left upon myself and Jones was that it contains much more of Giacomo Ferro than of D'Enrico. I have already explained that the construction of this chapel involved the demolition of the early Fainting Madonna chapel.

### *Chapel No. 38. The Crucifixion*

Neither Fassola nor Torrotti date this work, but I have already shown reason for believing that it should be given to some time between the years 1520 and 1528. Fassola says that the figure of Christ on the Cross is not the original one, which was stolen, and somehow or

## *Ex Voto*

other found its way to the Church of S. Andrea at Vercelli, where, according to Colombo (p. 237), a crucifix, traditionally said to be this one, was preserved until the close of the last century. Bordiga says that there is no reason to believe this story. The present crucifix is of wood, and is probably an old one long venerated, and embodied in his work by Gaudenzio himself, partly out of respect to public feeling, and partly, perhaps, as an unexceptionable excuse for avoiding a great difficulty. The thieves also, according to Bordiga and Cusa, are of wood, not terra-cotta, being done from models in clay by Gaudenzio as though the wood were marble. He did not like raising a terra-cotta figure off the ground. The large fissure in the floor is intentional and represents the earthquake—as at S. Vivaldo in Tuscany.

We have met with the extreme figure to the spectator's left in the *Ecce Homo* chapel. He is also, as I have said, found twice in the *Disputa* fresco, done some twenty years or so before the work we are now considering, once with the face fully shown, and once almost hidden by two nearer heads, that have probably been painted over, or been substituted for, an abortive attempt to get a good likeness. He is also the Pilate in the *Christ before Pilate* of the great S. Maria frescoes done some six years later, but this can only be recognized by the help of opera-glasses, or a large photograph.

We might be tempted to think that the person who was so powerfully impressed on Gaudenzio's mind during so many years was some Varallo notable, or some Varallo model whom he was in the habit of employing. This, however, is not so; for in the first place the supposed model was old in, say, 1507, and he is no older in the *Crucifixion* chapel, so that here



GAUDENZIO FERRARI'S CRUCIFIXION

General view looking towards the Good Thief



## *Crucifixion*

Gaudenzio must have been working from a residuary impression of a figure with which he had been familiar many years previously and not from life; and in the second we find the head repeated in the works of Milanese artists who in all probability never came near Varallo. We certainly find it in a drawing, of which I give a reduced reproduction, and which the British Museum authorities ascribe to Bernardino de' Conti. It is certainly, as was pointed out to me by Cav. Prof. Bertini, to be found in a picture by Bernardino de' Conti now in the Brera. I also recognize it unquestionably in a drawing in the Windsor collection ascribed to Leonardo da Vinci—a drawing, however, which it is not easy to think is actually by him, and in several other drawings rightly or wrongly given to Leonardo. I have little doubt that a reminiscence of the same head is intended in a drawing ascribed to Leonardo da Vinci in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, only that the artist, whoever he may be, has added hair (which is obviously not drawn from nature), and has not produced so good a likeness as Gaudenzio and Bernardino de' Conti (in his drawing, for the painted portrait is not so good) have done, but about this last I am less certain. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the figure represents a character who in the time of Gaudenzio's youth was familiar to Milanese artists, and who made a deep impression upon more than one of them. This will be even more apparent to those who are familiar with the terra-cotta figures at Varallo, for these can be seen from several points of view, and a fuller knowledge of the head is thus obtained than a flat impression from a single point can give.

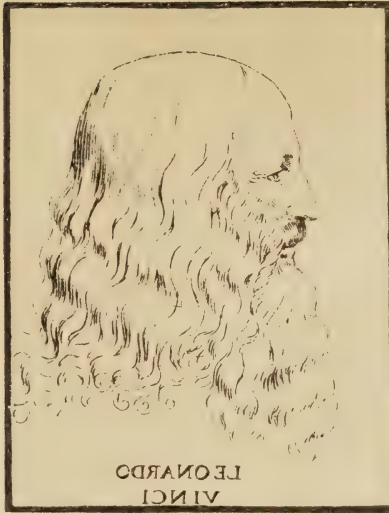
It is not likely that the figure is that of a mere model, for it has no, or very little, connection with the action of the piece, and is evidently placed where it is—the

## *Ex Voto*

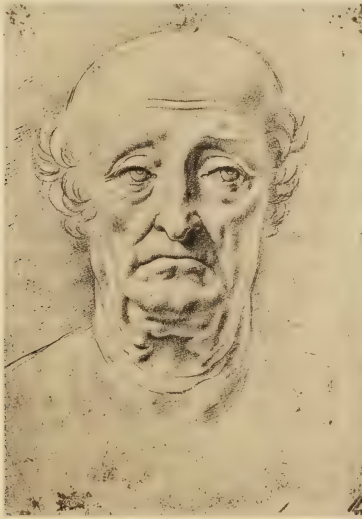
extreme figure to the left, which is always a place of honour—for the sake of introducing the portrait into the composition. Gaudenzio would not have been so impressed, say, with old Christie<sup>1</sup> as to give his portrait from memory twenty years after he had seen him last, to put this portrait in the place of honour, and to make the work much more emphatic as a portrait than as the figure of an actor in his drama, inasmuch as he has turned the head towards the spectator and away from the central incident. Moreover, we must remember that it is not this figure alone that is repeated, but that there is a second replica still in close association with the first, and that this second replica is too like Leonardo da Vinci to pass for any one else, especially considering the emphasis given to it by its being repeated at all. It is more probable, then, that we must look for some well-known Milanese art-world character as the original for which the figure was intended.

We know that Gaudenzio Ferrari studied under Stefano Scotto, and have every reason to think that Bernardino de' Conti—who, I see, studied in the school of Foppa, one of Scotto's predecessors, if not under Scotto himself, must have known him perfectly well. Leonardo da Vinci kept the rival school at Milan, and the two schools were to one another much what those kept by the late Mr. F. S. Cary and Mr. Lee were some thirty years ago in London. Leonardo, therefore, also doubtless knew Scotto by sight if not personally. I incline to think, then, that we have here the original we are looking for, and that Gaudenzio when working at what he probably regarded as the most important work of his life determined to introduce his master, just as I, if I were writing a novel, might be tempted to introduce a reminiscence of my own old schoolmaster,

<sup>1</sup> A famous model of some five-and-twenty years ago.



PROFILE OF LEONARDO DA VINCI BY HIMSELF (REVERSED)



STEFANO SCOTTO

From a drawing attributed to Bernardino de' Conti









GAUDENZIO FERRARI'S PORTRAITS OF  
STEFANO SCOTTO AND LEONARDO DA VINCI

## *Crucifixion*

and to make the portrait as faithful as I could. Bernardino Luini, the only other person whom Gaudenzio might couple twice with Leonardo, was still a young man when Gaudenzio first painted the figure we are considering; he, therefore, is out of the question.

The figure next to that of Scotto is so like the portraits of Leonardo da Vinci—of which I give the one that I believe to be the best—that, as I have already said, I do not think it can be intended for any one else. I had been reminded of Leonardo da Vinci by this figure long before I knew of Scotto's existence, and had often wondered why he was not made the outside and most prominent figure; now, then, that I see reason to think the outside figure intended for Gaudenzio's own master, I understand why the preference has been given him; next, however, to his own master Gaudenzio has placed the other great contemporary art-teacher at Milan whose pupil he never actually was, but whose influence he must have felt profoundly. I also derive an impression that Gaudenzio liked and respected Scotto though he may have laughed at him, but that he did not like Leonardo who, by the way, had been dead about ten years when this figure was placed where it now is.

I see, therefore, the two figures as those of Scotto and of Leonardo da Vinci, and think it likely that in the one portrait we have by far the most characteristic likeness of Leonardo that has come down to us. In his own drawings of himself he made himself out such as he wanted others to think him; here, if I mistake not, he has been rendered as others saw him. The portrait of Scotto is beyond question an admirable likeness; it is not likely that the Leonardo is less successful, and we find in the searching, eager, harassed, and harassing unquiet of the figure here given a more acceptable rendering of Leonardo's character and appearance than

## *Ex Voto*

any among the likenesses of himself which are more or less plausibly ascribed to him. The question is one of so much interest that I must defer its fuller treatment for another work, in which I hope to deal with the portraits of Giovanni and Gentile Bellini, and with Holbein's "Danse des Paysans."<sup>1</sup> I have, however, given above the greater part of the information of which I am as yet possessed upon the subject. In conclusion, I may say that I mentioned the matter to Signor Boccioloni the Sindaco of Varallo, and to other friends with whom I have discussed the question on the spot, and found that people generally seemed to consider the case as rather a strong one.

As regards the portraits supposed to be found on the frescoes, they are all so doubtful that I will refrain from discussing them, but will refer my readers to Colombo. The only exception is a portrait of one of the Scarroggini family which is seen on the right-hand wall above the door, the fact of the portraiture being attested by a barbarous scrawl upon the fresco itself.

Caccia says of the work with more enthusiasm than even I can command, but in a style of poetry which I find it fairly easy to render, that we may see among the spectators

". . . à maraviglia,  
Vi son più donne con la sua famiglia; "

which means in English:

"And here you may behold with wondering eyes,  
Several ladies with their families."

<sup>1</sup> Papers by Butler on these subjects are reprinted in his *Collected Essays* in the Shrewsbury Edition.—A.T.B.

## *Crucifixion*

He continues that

“ Gli Angeli star nel ciel tutti dolenti  
Si veggon per pietà del suo Signore,  
E turbati mostrarsi gli elementi,  
Privi del sole, e d' ogni suo splendore,  
E farsi terremoti, e nascer venti,  
Par che si veda, d' estremo dolore,  
E il tutto esser non pinto ne in scultura,  
Ma dell' istesso parto di Natura.

E se a pieno volessi raccontare  
Di questo tempio la bellezza, e l' arte,  
Le statue, le pitture, e l' opre rare,  
Saria (?) un vergar in infinite carte  
Che non han queste in tutto il mondo pare,  
Cerchisi pur in qual si voglia parte,  
Che di Fidia, Prasitele, e d' Apelle,  
Ne di Zeuxi non fur l' opre si belle.”

\*

“ Search the world through in whatsoever part,  
And scan each best known masterpiece of art,  
In Phidias or Praxiteles or Apelles,  
You will find nothing that done half so well is.”

In this translation I have again attempted to preserve  
—not to say pickle—the spirit of the original.

I may note in passing that the two terra-cotta horses  
have their ears cropped pretty close down. In the  
frescoes some of the horses have their ears cropped, and  
others not. I should also add that since my first edition  
was published, Signor Arienta has called my attention  
to two raised monograms on the shield with a lion on it,  
of which I give illustrations herewith. The left-hand

## *Ex Voto*

cut is from the monogram at the top of the shield, which is probably Gaudenzio's own. The right-hand one is most likely that of Milano Scarrognini.



TWO  
MONOGRAMS  
IN THE  
CRUCIFIXION  
CHAPEL



\*

Returning to the work as a whole, if the modelled figures fail anywhere it is in respect of action—more especially as regards the figures to the spectator's right, which want the concert and connection without which a scene ceases to be dramatic, and becomes a mere assemblage of figures placed in juxtaposition. It would be going too far to say that complaint on this score can be justly insisted on in respect even of these figures, nevertheless it will be felt that Gaudenzio Ferrari the painter could harmonize his figures and give them a unity of action which was denied to him as a sculptor. It must not be forgotten that his modelled work derives an adventitious merit from the splendour of the frescoes with which it is surrounded, and from our admiration of the astounding range of power manifested by their author.

As a painter, it must be admitted that Gaudenzio Ferrari was second to very few that had gone before him, but as a sculptor, he did not do enough to attain

## *Crucifixion*

perfect mastery over his art. If he had done as much in sculpture as in painting he would doubtless have been as great a master of the one as the other; as it was, in sculpture he never got beyond the stage of being an exceedingly able and interesting scholar;—this, however, is just the kind of person whose work in spite of imperfection is most permanently delightful. Among the defects which he might have overcome is one that is visible in his earlier painting as well as in his sculpture, and which in painting he got rid of, though evidently not without difficulty—I mean, a tendency to get some of his figures unduly below life size. I have often seen in his paintings that he has got his figures rather below life size, when apparently intending that they should be full-sized, and worse than this, that some are smaller in proportion than others. Nevertheless, when we bear in mind that the Crucifixion chapel was the first work of its kind, that it consists of four large walls and a ceiling covered with magnificent frescoes, comprising about 150 figures; that it contains twenty-six life-sized statues, two of them on horseback, and much detail by way of accessory, all done with the utmost care, and all coloured up to nature,—when we bear this in mind and realize what it all means, it is not easy to refrain from saying, as I have earlier done, that the Crucifixion chapel is the most daringly ambitious work of art that any one man was ever yet known to undertake; and if we could see it as Gaudenzio left it, we should probably own that in the skill with which the conception was carried out, no less than in its initial daring, it should rank as perhaps the most remarkable work of art that even Italy has produced.

FASSOLA AND TORROTTI BOTH SAY THAT the terra-cotta figures here are by a pupil of Giovanni D'Enrico. Bordiga says that the three figures forming the group upon the cross were done contemporaneously with the Nailing of Christ to the Cross, which we have already considered, and that they are in the style of D'Enrico. If so, they are not in his best style, while the others are among the worst on the Sacro Monte, with the exception of one, which I never even observed until last summer, so completely is it overpowered by the worse than mediocrity with which it is surrounded. This figure is perhaps, take it all round, the finest on the Sacro Monte, and is generally known as "Il Vecchietto" or "the little old man." It is given as the frontispiece of this book.

I was led to observe it by a casual remark made by my old and valued friend Signor Dionigi Negri of Varallo, to whom I am indebted for invaluable assistance in writing this book, and indeed at whose instigation it was undertaken. He told me there was a portrait of the man who gave this part of the ground to the founders of the Sanctuary; he was believed to be a small peasant proprietor—one of the "alcuni particolari poueri" mentioned by Fassola as owning the site—who, having been asked to sell the land, gave it instead. This was the story, but I knew that the land was given not later than 1490-1493, whereas the chapel in question is not earlier than 1630, when no portrait of the peasant benefactor was possible. I therefore went to the chapel, and finding the figure, saw what must be obvious to any one who looks at it with attention, I mean, firstly, how fine it was, and secondly, that it had not been designed for its present place.

This last is clear from the hand, which from outside



## *Descent from the Cross*

at first appears to be holding a pair of pincers and a hammer, as though to assist at the Deposition, but which proves to have been originally designed to hold a stick—or something round, the hammer and pincers being at present tied on with a piece of string, to a hand that is not holding them. I asked the opinion of Cav. Prof. Antonini of Varallo and his son, both of them admirable sculptors, and found them as decided as myself in their admiration of the figure. Both of them, at different times, were good enough to go inside the chapel with me, and both agreed with me that the figure was no part of the design of the group in which it now is.

There is a large, well-defined patch of mended ground covering the space occupied by the figure itself. There is no other such patch under any other figure, and the most reasonable inference is that some alteration has been made here. The expression, moreover, of the face is not suitable for a Deposition. There is a holy tranquil smile of joy, thankfulness, and satisfaction, which perfectly well befits one who is looking up into the heavens, as he might at an Assumption of the Virgin, or an Ascension, but is not the expression which so consummate an artist as the man who made this figure would give to a bystander at a Deposition from the Cross. Grief and horror would be still too recent to admit of the sweet serene air of ineffable contentment which is here given.

Lastly, the style of the work is so different from that of all the other figures in the chapel that no similarity can be seen between it and them. It would be too much to say that the others are as bad as this is good, but the difference between Rembrandt's *Old Woman* in our National Gallery and an average Royal Academy portrait of fifty years ago, is not more striking than that between the *Vecchietto* and his immediate neighbours.

## *Ex Voto*

I can find no mention of the figure in Fassola, or Torrotti. Bordiga says, "On the left there is a man in peasant's costume, holding his hat in reverence of Jesus, and said to be a benefactor of the chapel." He does not say anything about the excellence of the workmanship, nor, indeed, have I heard any one, except the two sculptors, Cav. Prof. Antonini and his son, speak of the work in terms which showed a perception of its merit. If the world knows little of its greatest men it seems to know not much more about its greatest works of art, nor, if it continues to look for guidance in this matter to professional critics and society art-dabblers, is it likely to improve its knowledge. Cusa says of it:

"È fra essi un vecchietto naturale assai pel rozzo costume che veste, e per la semplicità del atto; egli guarda Gesù in atto di levarsi il cappello, mentre con l'altra mano tiene le tenaglie ed il martello. Lo si dice ritratto di un Rimellese, benefattore della cappella."

I asked the two sculptors Antonini if they could help me in settling the question to whom the work should be assigned, and they agreed with me that it could not be given to Gaudenzio. It is too masterly, easy, and too like the work of Velasquez in painting, to be by one who is not known to have done more in sculpture than some two score or so of figures on the Sacro Monte now remaining, and a few others that have been lost. The *Vecchietto* is the work of one to whom modelling in clay was like breathing, walking, or eating and drinking, and Gaudenzio never reached such freedom and proficiency as this.

With few exceptions even the best art-work falls into one of two classes, and offers signs either of immaturity or decline. Take Donatello, and Luca della Robbia, or, in painting, Giovanni Bellini, John Van Eyck, Holbein, Giotto, and even Gaudenzio Ferrari in his earlier work;

## *Descent from the Cross*

take again, in music, Purcell and Corelli; no words of affectionate admiration are good enough for any one of these great men, but they none of them say the last word that is to be said in their respective arts. Michael Angelo said the last word; but then he said just a word or two over. So with Titian and Leonardo da Vinci, and in music with Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. We admire them, and know that each in many respects surpassed everything that has been done either before or since, but in each case (and more especially with the three last named) we feel the presence of an autumnal tint over all the luxuriance of development, which, while hardly detracting from the pleasure we receive, still tells of an art that has taken not an upward but a downward path. I know that I am apt to take fancies to works of art and artists; I hold, for example, that my friend Mr. H. F. Jones's songs are finer than an equal number of any written by any other living composer—and I believe that people will one day agree with me, though they will doubtless take their time in doing so—but with all this tendency towards extravagance I endeavour to preserve a method in my madness, and with most works find that they fall readily into the growing or the decaying. It is only with very few, as with Homer and Shakespeare at their best, the Venus of Milo, the Ilyssus, the finest work of Rembrandt, Giorgione, and Velasquez, and in music with Handel, that I can see no step left unclimbed, yet none taken on the downward path. Assuredly the Vecchietto must be classed with the very few works which, being of the kind of fruit that they are, are dead ripe, without one trace either of immaturity or decay.

Difficult, however, as the problem who made this statue is, it is simplified by the reflection that it can only be given either to Gaudenzio or Tabachetti. I suggested

## *Ex Voto*

D'Enrico's name to Cav. Prof. Antonini to see how he received it, but—thinking doubtless more of Giacomo Ferro than of D'Enrico—he said “E-whew,” and tossed his thumb over his shoulder, as only an Italian can, as much as to say that D'Enrico set about his figures with too light a heart to get a Vecchietto out of them; Gaudenzio, then, being impossible and D'Enrico ordered out of court, it only remains to give the work to Tabachetti, with whose sleeping St. Joseph and with not a little else of whose work it presents much analogy; for the notion that a stranger of name unknown came to Varallo, did this single figure, and then went away without doing any more either there or anywhere else in the least like it, is as incredible as that it is the work of D'Enrico.

As for the question of the source from which the figure came we should remember that the Chiesa Vecchia dell' Assunta was pulled down at the end of the last century; and this, considering the excellent preservation in which the Vecchietto is still found, and the comparatively recent appearance of the disturbance of the ground under his feet, seems the most likely place for him to have come from. There were two opportunities in this church, one of which certainly was, while the other very well might have been, made the occasion for a group of figures with upturned heads. The first of these, of course, is the Assumption of the Madonna, of which Caccia says there was a representation of her “come ascese in Cielo, con le statue delli dodeci Apostoli intorno di rilievo,” and there may very well have been a benefactor or so in addition. The second was the impress of our Saviour's last footprint on the Mount of Olives before He ascended into heaven. This is mentioned by Fassola as a feature of special importance, and as having had an indulgence conceded

## *Descent from the Cross*

to it by the Pope in 1488 while it was on its road from Jerusalem. This relic was held in great veneration, and it is easy to imagine that its effect may have been enhanced by surrounding it with figures looking upwards into the heavens towards the clouds that had already received the body of the Redeemer. All this, however, is mere conjecture, for there is not a tittle of evidence in support of it, and we are left practically with nothing more than we can still see within the limits of the figure itself to give a clue either to its maker, or the source from which it came, but we may incline to think that it is the portrait of a benefactor, for no one but a benefactor would have been treated with so much realism. The man is not a mere peasant; his clothes are homely, but they are good, and there is that about him which harmonizes well enough with his having been in a position of comfort. Common peasants may be seen in the Shepherds' chapel, and the Vecchietto is clearly of higher social status than these. He looks like a Vallesian yeoman or peasant proprietor, of some substance; and he was doubtless a benefactor, not of this, but some other chapel.

I have said there are analogies between this figure and others by Tabacchetti which after all make it not very difficult to decide the question to whom it should be given. We do not, indeed, find another Vecchietto, but we shall find more than one figure that exhibits equal truth to nature, and equal freedom from exaggeration. It is not possible, for example, to have greater truth to nature than we find in the figures of Adam and Eve in the first chapel. There is not one trace either of too much or too little, of exaggeration or of shortcoming; the nude figure of a man and of a woman were wanted, and the nude figure of a man and of a woman are given, with neither more nor less modelling than

## *Ex Voto*

what would be most naturally seen in a young and comely couple. So again with the charming figure of the Virgin sewing in the First Vision of St. Joseph chapel. The Virgin and the Vecchietto are as unlike each other as two figures can be, but they are both stamped with the same freedom from affectation, and the same absolute and easy mastery over the means employed. The same applies to the sleeping St. Joseph, in which case there is a closer analogy between the two figures themselves. It applies also to a not inconsiderable extent to the man with a goitre who is leading Christ in the Calvary chapel. This figure is not done from life, being a repetition of one by Gaudenzio, but it is so living that we feel sure it would have been more living still if Tabachetti had had the model before him from which Gaudenzio in all probability actually worked. At Crea, there are other figures by Tabachetti to which I will call attention presently, and which present not inconsiderable analogies to the Vecchietto. I explain the fact that the analogies are not closer, by reflecting that this is one of the few cases in which Tabachetti has left us a piece of portrait work, pure and simple, and that his treatment of the head and figure in pure portraiture, would naturally differ from that adopted in an ideal and imaginative work.

I have allowed the foregoing to stand as in my first edition, but when it was written, having been but little inside the Ecce Homo chapel, I had not seen the figure which I now take to be a portrait of Tabachetti well enough to be struck with it as I have since been, and had not therefore observed that the Vecchietto is the same person as this last, only some thirty years older. I cannot, of course, be positive that this is so, but find people generally agree with me as to the identity of the figures.<sup>1</sup> Whether it came from the destroyed church

<sup>1</sup> [See p. 84.]

## *Descent from the Cross*

of the Assunta; whether Tabachetti did it on the occasion of a third final visit to Varallo as a very old man; whether when the Paradiso chapel at Crea was dispersed, this figure found its way down to some old curiosity dealer's at Vercelli, and was there picked up by some one who took a fancy to it and thought it would do for the Sacro Monte; these are points which I can no more settle now than I could when my first edition was published. I can only say that I have no doubt the Vecchietto is a portrait of Tabachetti himself as an old man getting on for eighty, and rejoice to see that in his extreme old age there is not a trace of failing power, but rather of still ripening genius.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: THE PIETÀ AND REMAINING  
CHAPELS

WE NOW REACH THE PIETÀ CHAPEL, about which I have given my main conclusion in chapter 5.

The groining of the roof, as pointed out to me by Signor Arienta, shows that this chapel and the contiguous Entombment were once one chamber. In Tibaldi's plan they are given as already subdivided, but the smaller half does not seem to have been occupied. The larger half contained the Entombment—doubtless the eight wooden figures, six of which are now in the museum at Varallo.

The plan also, as I have repeatedly said, shows the Journey to Calvary as occupying the site now occupied by the Temptation, and then called "la Chiesa Nera." Sixteen years later, when we come to Caccia, all this is changed; the Journey to Calvary is no longer in the Temptation chapel, which was already filled as at present, and we have not one Journey to Calvary only, but two, in close proximity, one of which is no doubt Tabachetti's existing chapel, and we have also an Entombment. I suppose, then, that the eight Entombment figures were moved from the larger into the smaller subdivision of the present Pietà block, from which, indeed, they were only removed in 1826, and that the old Journey to Calvary figures were placed in the chapel thus vacated. This was done in order to bring the Journey to Calvary topographically close to the Crucifixion.

That the present Pietà chapel once contained a Journey to Calvary is plain from the background which still represents this subject—the two thieves being in the existing fresco while the Christ was reserved for sculpture. This fresco was no doubt a copy from the original by Gaudenzio which would be destroyed when the old



## Pietà

Chiesa Nera was turned into the Temptation chapel. The original occupied a larger wall, so the copy had to be cut down; this explains why we now find a horse and a flag cut in two in a way that forbids us to suppose the design to have been made for the wall on which we now find it, the subject, in spite of this mutilation, turning the corner and being continued on the wall that is at right angles to it. Here we find the two thieves, one of whom Bordiga in his notes to Pianazzi's engraving of the work has strangely mistaken for Christ himself. The fact that the original design must have been mutilated was pointed out to me by Signor Arienta, who, however, does not agree with me in my explanation of it.

I presume that the change was made between 1570 and 1580 in order to meet Tibaldi's objection to the false topographical relation between the old Journey to Calvary and the Crucifixion chapels without going to the expense of a new chapel. The effect was found unsatisfactory, the new chapel being too small for the figures, and Tabachetti's present chapel was resolved upon. When this was completed the older work was allowed to fall into decay, the statues being ultimately dispersed to make room for D'Enrico's present Pietà, and the frescoes being left to serve as best they could for background to this subject.

My view is confirmed by Revelli's guide book of 1606, in which Tabachetti's Journey to Calvary chapel is described as follows:

“Come N.S. porta la croce sopra le spalle al Monte Calvario seguitato da una gran turba a cavallo e a piedi e dalla Vergine santissima, e S. Giovanni ed altre donne [*sic*] e Sta Veronica col panno dinanzi, tutte di rilievo ben intese e bellissime, e la Chiesa è di gran altezza, e spesa e in breve sarà fornita.”

These last words refer, of course, to Morazzone's

## *Ex Voto*

frescoes, which were completed about this time. Revelli is therefore speaking of Tabachetti's chapel. He adheres to Caccia's order of sequence throughout; it follows, therefore (if this is questioned), that of the two Journeys to Calvary given by Caccia the first is the one intended for Tabachetti's chapel. In the guide book of 1640 Gaudenzio's old Journey to Calvary still appears and is described as "Come Giesu oppresso dal peso della Croce è sollevato." Neither the 1606 nor the 1640 guides mention D'Enrico's now existing Pietà, and the plan of 1671 omits the chapel in question, but whether this is accidental or whether the chapel was closed when the plan was made, Gaudenzio's work being decayed and D'Enrico's, though long made, not yet substituted, I cannot determine.

### *Chapel No. 41. The Entombment*

We have already seen that this was the first chapel with figures in it on the Sacro Monte. Of the old eight wooden figures that it contained, two are still on the mountain in a sort of vault adjacent to, or under, the main church, and near the furnace in which those that superseded them were baked. Six are in the Museum at Varallo. I saw them a few weeks ago, not yet arranged, leaning up against the wall with very battered and dilapidated glories; the recumbent Christ was standing more or less on end, and the whole group was in a pathetic state of dismemberment that will doubtless soon make way for a return to their earlier arrangement. The figures are interesting, but it cannot be pretended that they are of great value. They look very much as if they had been out somewhere the night before.

Of the figures in the present chapel the less said the better.

## *Remaining Works*

### *Remaining Chapels and Chiesa Maggiore*

The chapel of St. Francis is open to the air, and contains nothing but an altar, and a modern fresco of the death of the saint.

Near it is the Holy Sepulchre, which is entered from a small cell in which there is a figure of the Magdalene, and from which the visitor must creep on hands and knees into the Sepulchre itself. The figure of Christ is not actually in the Sepulchre, but can be seen through a window opening into the contiguous chapel, where it is over the altar. The early writers say that there were also two angels by Gaudenzio ("statue di Gaudenzio divotissime"), but Bordiga says nothing of this. The upper part of this building was the abode of Bernardino Caimi and his successors until the year 1577.

As for the Holy Sepulchre itself it is low and dark, which I have no doubt is the reason why I have neglected it on the occasions of each of my two latest visits to Varallo, and thus failed to reach the adjacent Oratory, which Bordiga says was erected about the year 1702. Fassola and Torrotti wrote before this date, so that the angels mentioned by them as by Gaudenzio may have been removed when the present fabric was erected. At any rate Bordiga speaks as though they were paintings by one Tarquinio Grassi and not sculptured figures at all. Torrotti says that visitors to the Holy Sepulchre used to burn candles, tapers, and torches, each one according to his purse or piety, and that they did this not so much to see with as to pray. "Here," he continues, "the great S. Carlo spent his evenings agreeably" ("spendeva gradevolmente le notti"). "Few," he concludes drily, and perhaps with a shade of the same quiet irony that led the Psalmist to say what he did about "one" day in certain courts, "can leave it

## *Ex Voto*

without feeling devoutly thankful." About the candles Fassola says that there was a kind of automatic arrangement for getting them like that whereby we can now buy butter-scotch or matches at the railway stations, by dropping a penny into a slot. He says:

"And as the figure of Christ can only be seen by the help of candles (for which reason all pilgrims whose means permit are accustomed to burn them, being naturally prompted thereto each one according to his faith)—by throwing money into a hole wherein the same candles lie, each pilgrim can be made quite comfortable and contented." ("Gettando il denaro per un buco dove stanno le medesime candelette, comodamente può restar ogni divoto contento.")

"The mercies vouchsafed here," continues the same writer, "are innumerable—in all parts may be seen votive pictures both old and recent."

In the open cloister hard by is shown the wooden bed on which S. Carlo lay when he came to visit the Sacro Monte, and the stone which is said to be a facsimile of the one rolled in front of the Holy Sepulchre itself. Many years ago I spent several weeks at Varallo sketching and painting on the Sacro Monte. A most excellent and lovable old priest, now doubtless long since dead, took rather a fancy to me, and used to implore me to become a Catholic. One day he took me up to this stone and spoke long and earnestly about it. What a marvellous miracle it was. There was the stone; I could see it for myself. What a dumb but eloquent testimony was it not offering; how could I account for such things? and more to the same effect, all said obviously in good faith, and with no idea save that of guiding me to the truth. I was powerless. I could not go into facts or arguments—I could not be obstinate without getting something like his consent—and he was instant in season and out of season in endeavouring

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to get mine. At last I could stand it no longer, and said, "My dearest sir, I am the son of an English clergyman who is himself the son of another English clergyman; my father and mother are living. If you will tell me that I am to hold my father born in more than common sin, to have committed a crime in marrying my mother, and that I am to hold myself as one who ought never to have been born, then I will accept what you have said about that stone. Till then let me go my way, and you yours." He said not a word more, and never again approached the subject; the nearest he ever went to it was to say that he liked to see me sketching about the Sacro Monte, for it could do me nothing but good. I trust that I have done it no harm.

The chapel representing the Magdalene at the feet of the risen Christ has disappeared. It contained two statues only, and two prophets by Gaudenzio were painted outside on the wall. It stood "sotto un auanzo dei Portici antichi seguentemente al Sepolcro." It was probably a very early work.

Through an arch under the raised portico or arcaded gallery are three small ruined cells called now "Il Paradiso," and numbered 43, 44, and 45; of one of these Fassola tells us that it contained "many modern statues" by Gaudenzio Sceti, and frescoes by Gianoli; they are all now mere wrecks. There is no important work by Gaudenzio Sceti remaining on the Sacro Monte, but there is a terra-cotta crucifix with a Virgin and a St. John by him, of no great value, in the church of S. Gaudenzio. What remains of his work on the Sacro Monte itself consists of statues of S. Anna and the Virgin as a child upon her lap in the chapel or cell numbered 43.

Chapel 44 need not detain us. What few remains of figures it contains are uninteresting and ruined.

I have already spoken of chapel No. 45, which once

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represented an entombment of the Madonna, as in all probability the oldest building, and as certainly containing the oldest, and by no means least interesting frescoes on the Sacro Monte. There is nothing inside the chapel except these frescoes, but outside it there are many scrawls, of which the earliest I have noticed is 1520—the supposed 1437 being certainly 1537. The writer of one of these scrawls has added the words “fuit hic” to his signature as John Van Eyck has done to the signature of his portrait of John Arnolfini and his wife. I have found this addition of “fuit hic” in a signature of a certain “Cardinalis de al . . .” who scratched his name “1389 die 19 Mag” on a fresco to the left of the statue of S. Zenone in the church of S. Zenone at Verona. On a fresco in the very interesting castle of Fénis in the valley of Aosta, to which I hope to return in another work, there is scratched “Hic sponsus cum sponsâ fuit 1790 25 May,” the “May” being an English May; Jones and I thought the writer had begun to add “London” but had stopped. The “fuit hic,” therefore, of John Van Eyck’s signature should not be translated as we might be tempted to wish to translate it, “This was John Van Eyck.”

Returning to the Sacro Monte, there remains only the Chiesa Vecchia, removed at the end of the last century to make room for the building that was till lately the “casa degli esercizi,” or house in which the priests on the mountain performed their spiritual exercises. This is now let out in apartments during the summer, and is called the Casino. The old sacristy, now the *archivio*, still remains, and contains the fresco of the Last Supper by Lanini; it bears strong traces of the influence of his already mentioned master Gaudenzio. Besides the impress of Christ’s foot and the Assumption of the Virgin, the church contained an Annunciation by

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Gaudenzio and frescoes of St. Catherine and St. Cecilia; the Cupola was also decorated by him. This work was undertaken in 1530, the greater angels being by Gaudenzio and the smaller by Lanini and Fermo Stella. These frescoes all perished when the church was pulled down.

The present Chiesa Maggiore was begun on 9th June 1614—D'Enrico's design having, so Bordiga says, been approved on the 1st April in that year. Fassola says that in 1671 the only parts completed were the Choir and Cupola, the whole body of the church being left unfinished. Bordiga speaks of the church as having been finished in 1649, in which year, on the feast of the Birth of the Virgin, her image was taken from the old church and placed in the new, so when Fassola says "unfinished" he must refer to decoration only. The steps leading up to the church and the unfinished columns were erected in 1825 from designs by Marchese Don Luigi Cagnola, the architect of the Arco della Pace at Milan. It was ere long found that the stone selected was unreliable, so that all must be done over again; the work has, therefore, been suspended.

The Cupola is covered with about 140 modelled figures of angels, by Dionigi Bussola and Giambattista Volpino, Milanese sculptors, who worked from designs made by Antonio Tempesta, a Florentine. They did this work about the year 1660. The brothers Montalti painted the frescoes, some more highly coloured groups being added by Antonio Cucchi of Milan in 1750.

In the crypt there is a sumptuous shrine containing the statue of the Madonna, said to have been made by St. Luke. This was erected in 1854, but on the night between the 4th and 5th October in the same year the crown was stolen from the Virgin's head, and in the following year there was a solemn expiatory function,

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with festivities extending over three days, in order to celebrate the replacing of the stolen crown by a new one.

It cannot be said that any of the works of art now in the church are of considerable interest, but an important work of art was nevertheless produced in it at the celebration of the fourth centenary of the birth of Gaudenzio Ferrari, which was held in 1885. I refer to the Mass by Cagnoni, which was here performed for the first time, and which showed that the best traditions of old Italian ecclesiastical music are still occasionally adhered to. I was present at the production of the work, and have heard no modern Italian music that has pleased me nearly as much. I ventured to ask the Maestro for the baton he had used in conducting it, and am proud to keep it as a memorial of a fine performance of a very fine work. The baton is several old newspapers neatly folded up and covered with silk.

Since my original edition was published I have twice, at Bergamo, had the pleasure of hearing this work again—once in full rehearsal and once at the performance. I can only say that I found it grow upon me, and that the impression produced when first I heard it was strengthened. I see the Maestro now uses a wooden baton to conduct with, and was pleased at learning from him that he finds it more convenient.



I HAVE NOW TO ADD A SHORT ACCOUNT OF what remains of Tabachetti's work at Crea, to the very inadequate description of his work at Varallo that has been given in some earlier chapters.

Crea is most easily approached from Casale, a large opulent commercial town upon the Po, that has already received the waters of the Dora Baltea, and though not yet swelled by the influx of the Ticino and Adda, has become a noble river. The town is built entirely on the plain, but the rich *colline* of the Monferrato district begin to rise immediately outside it, and continue in an endless series of vineclad slopes and village-capped hill-tops as far as the eye can reach. These *colline* are of exquisite beauty in themselves, and from their sides the most magnificent views of Piedmont and the Alps extend themselves in every direction. The people are a well-grown comely race, kind and easy to get on with. Nothing could exceed the civility and comfort of the Hotel Rosa Rossa, the principal inn of the city. The town contains many picturesque bits, but in our short stay we did not see any very remarkable architectural features, and it does not form an exception to the rule that the eastern cities of Northern Italy are far more beautiful than the western. The churches, never one would imagine very striking, have been modernized and restored; nor were we told that there is any collection of pictures in the town which is likely to prove of interest.

The visitor should leave Casale by the 7.58 A.M. train on the line for Asti, and get out at Serralunga, the third station on the road. Here the sanctuary of Crea can be seen crowning a neighbouring *collina* with a chapel that has an arcaded gallery running round it, like some of those at Varese. Many other chapels testify to the former importance of the place; on the whole, however,

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the effect of the buildings cannot compare with that of the sanctuaries of Varallo and Varese. Taking a small carriage, which can always be had at the station (fare, to the sanctuary and back, eight francs), my friend, Mr. H. F. Jones, and myself ascended to Serralunga, finding the views continually become more and more bewitching as we did so; soon after passing through Serralunga we reached the first chapel, and after another zigzag or two of road found ourselves in the large open court in front of the church. Here there is an inn, where any one who is inclined to do so could very well sleep. The piazza of the sanctuary is some two thousand feet above the sea, and the views are in some respects finer even than those from the Sacro Monte of Varese itself, inasmuch as we are looking towards the chain of the Alps, instead of away from them.

We have already seen that the sanctuary at Crea was begun about 1590, a hundred years or so later than the Sacro Monte of Varallo, and a dozen years earlier than that of Varese. The church attached to the convent, in which a few monks still remain, contains a chapel with good frescoes by Macrino d'Alba; they are somewhat damaged, and the light is so bad that if the *guardiano* of the sanctuary had not kindly lent us a candle we could not have seen them. It is not easy to understand how they can have been painted in such darkness; they are, however, the most important work of this painter that I have yet seen, and give a more favourable impression of him than is likely to be formed elsewhere. Behind the high altar there is an oil picture also by Macrino d'Alba, signed as by the following couplet, which they may scan who can:

“Hoc tibi, diva parens, posuit faciente Macrino  
Bladratensis opus Johes ille Jacobus. 1503.”

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The "Macrino" and "1503" are in red paint, the rest in black. The picture is so dark, and the view of it so much obstructed by the high altar that it is impossible to see it well, but it seemed good. There is nothing else in the church, nor need the frescoes in the chapels containing the terra-cotta figures be considered; we were told they were painted by Caccia, better known as Moncalvo, but we could see nothing in them to admire. The sole interest of the sanctuary—except, of course, the surpassing beauty of its position—is vested in what few remains of Tabachetti's work may be found there, and in the light that these may throw upon what he has left at Varallo.

All the work by Tabachetti now remaining at Crea consists of the Martyrdom of St. Eusebius chapel, almost all of which is by him, perhaps a figure or two in the Sposalizio chapel, but certainly not the figures of St. Joseph and the Virgin, which are not even ascribed to him, the Virgin in the Annunciation chapel, some parts of the Judith and Holofernes, with which this subject is strangely backed; some few of the figures in the Marriage Feast at Cana chapel, and lastly, the wreck, which is all that remains, of the Assumption of the Virgin—commonly called "Il Paradiso." All the other chapels are either in a ruined state or have been renewed with modern figures during the last thirty years, and more especially during the last ten, at the instance, and, as we understood, at the expense of the present Archbishop of Milan, who does his *campagna* here every summer.

The most important chapel is the Martyrdom of St. Eusebius, below the sanctuary itself. The saint is supposed to have been martyred in front of the church of S. Andrea at Vercelli. Some four or so of the figures to the spectator's right are modern restorations;

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among them, however, there is a child of extreme sweetness and beauty, which must certainly be by Tabachetti, looking up and clinging to the dress of its mother, who has been restored, and is as commonplace as the child is the reverse. There are two restored or rather entirely new priests close by the mother and child, and near these is another new figure—a girl immediately to the child's right; this is so absurdly bad and out of proportion that it is not easy to understand how even the restorer can have allowed himself to make it. All the rest of the figures are by Tabachetti. A little behind the mother and child, but more to the spectator's right, and near to the wall of the chapel, there stands a boy one of whose lower eyelids is paralysed, and whose expression is one of fear and pain. This figure is so free alike from exaggeration or shortcoming, that it is hard to praise it too highly. Another figure in the background to the spectator's left—that of a goitred *crétin* who is handing stones to one of the stoners, has some of the same remarkably living look as is observable in the two already referred to; so also has another man in a green skull-cap, who is holding a small battle-axe and looking over the stoner's shoulders. Two of the stoners are very powerful figures. The man on horseback, in the background, appears to be a portrait probably of a benefactor. In spite of restoration, the work is still exceedingly impressive. The figures behind the saint act well together, the crowd is a crowd—a one in many, and a many in one—not, as with every one except Tabachetti who has tried to do a crowd in sculpture, a mere collection of units, that, whatever else they may be, are certainly not crowding one another. The main drawback of the work is that the chapel is too small for the subject—a matter over which Tabachetti probably had no control.

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It is with very great regret that I have been unable to photograph the work, but I was flatly refused permission to do so, though I applied through influential people to the Archbishop himself. No one need be at the trouble of going to see it who is not already impressed with a sense of Tabachetti's in some respects unrivalled genius, and who does not know how to take into consideration the evil influences of all sorts with which he was surrounded; those, however, who realize the magnitude of the task attempted, who will be at the pains of putting themselves, as far as may be, in the artist's place and judging of the work from the standpoint intended by him, and who will also in their imagination restore the damage which three centuries of exposure and restoration must assuredly have involved, will find themselves rewarded by a fuller comprehension of the work of a sculptor of the foremost rank than they can attain elsewhere except at Varallo itself.

I have said that some of the figures in the Sposalizio chapel, except Joseph and Mary, are ascribed to Tabachetti. I do not know on what grounds the ascription rests; they have been restored,—clogged with shiny paint, and suffered every ill that could well befall them short of being broken up and carted away. Any one who sampled Tabachetti by these figures might well be disappointed; two or three may be by him, but hardly more. In spite, however, of all that may be justly urged against them, they are marked by the same attempt at concert and unity of purpose which goes so far to redeem individual comparative want of interest. In the background is a coloured bas-relief of Rachel and Jacob at the well, and five camels.

In the Annunciation chapel the Virgin may well be, as she is said to be, by Tabachetti; she is a very beautiful figure, though not so fine as his Madonna and Child

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in the church of S. Gaudenzio at Varallo; she has been badly painted, and it is hard to say how much she has not suffered in consequence. Some parts of the story of Judith and Holofernes in the background are also good, but I do not think I should have seen Tabachetti in them unless I had been told that he was there.

The wreck of the chapel commonly called "Il Paradiso" crowns the hill, conspicuous for many a mile in every direction, but on reaching the grating we found no trace of the figures that doubtless once covered the floor of the chapel. All that remained was a huge pendant of angels, cherubs, and saints, swarming as it were to the ceiling in an inextricable knot of arms, legs, wings, faces, and flowing drapery; two circles of saints, bishops, and others, who might be fitly placed in Paradise, rising one above the other high up the walls of the chapel—the lower circle full-length figures, and the other half-length; and above this a higher and richly coloured crown of musical saints and angels in good preservation. In passing I may say that this is the place where the Vecchietto ought to have come from, though it is not likely that he did so.

The pendant retains much of its original colour, and must once have been a gorgeous and fitting climax. Still, no one can do much with such a subject. To attempt it is to fly in the face of every canon by the observance of which art can alone give lasting pleasure. It is to crib, cabin, and confine, within the limits of well-defined sensation and perception, ideas that are only tolerable when left in the utmost indefiniteness consistent with thought at all. It is depressing to think that he who could have left us portrait after portrait of all that was noblest and loveliest in the men and women of his age—who could give a life such as no one but himself, at any rate at that time, could give—should

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have had to spend months if not years upon a work that even when new can have been nothing better than a magnificent piece of stage decoration.

But of such miscarriages the kingdom of art is full. In the kingdom of art not only are many called and few chosen, but the few that do get chosen are for the most part chosen amiss, or are lavished in the infinite prodigality of nature. We flatter ourselves that among the kings and queens of art, music, and literature, or at any rate in the kingdom of the great dead, all wrongs shall be redressed, and patient merit shall take no more quips and scorns from the unworthy: there, if an able artist, as, we will say, F. H. Potter just dead, dies poor, neglected, and unable to fight his way through the ranks of men with not a tenth part of his genius, there, at any rate, shall right be done; there the mighty shall be put down from his seat, and the lowly and meek, if clever as well as good, shall meet his just reward. It is not so. There is no circle so exalted but the devil has got the run of it. As for the reputations of the great dead, they are governed in the main by the chicane that obtains among the living; it is only after generations of flourishing imposture that even approximate right gets done. Look at Raphael, see how he still reigns supreme over those who have the people's ears and purses at command. True, Guido, Guercino, and Domenichino have at last tumbled into the abyss, and we know very well that Raphael will ere long fall too, but Guido, Guercino, and Domenichino had a triumph of some two hundred years, during which none dared lift hand against them. Look again at that grossest of impostors—Bacon. Look at by far the greater number of the standard classical authors, painters, and musicians. All that can be said is that there is a *nisus* in the right direction which is not wholly in vain, and that though tens of thousands

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of men and women of genius are as dandelion seeds borne upon the air and perishing without visible result, yet there is here and there a seed that really does take root and spring upwards to be a plant on the whole more vigorous than that from which it sprung. Right and truth and justice, in their relation to human affairs, are as asymptotes which, though continually drawing nearer and nearer to the curve, can never reach it but by a violation of all on which their own existence is founded.

As for the Assumption chapel, those who would see it even as a wreck should lose no time; it is in full process of restoration; it is swept and garnished for immediate possession by a gentleman whom we met on the road down, and whose facility of execution in making crucified Christs out of plaster of Paris is something almost incredible. His type of face was Jewish, and it struck both Jones and me that his proficiency must be in some degree due to hereditary practice. He showed us one crucifix which he had only begun at eight o'clock that morning, and by eleven was as good as finished. He told us he had done the brand new Disputa chapel and the Agony in the Garden with the beautiful blue light thrown all over Christ through deep French ultramarine glass, and he was now going on with the other chapels as fast as he could. He said they had no oven for baking terra-cotta figures; besides, terra-cotta was such a much slower material to work in; he could make a gross of apostles in plaster more quickly than a single set of twelve in terra-cotta, and the effect was just as good when painted; so plaster of Paris and unrivalled facility of execution are to have everything their own way. Already what I can only call a shoddy bishop or pope or two, I forget which, have got in among the circle of Tabachetti's saints and angels that still remains. These are many of them portraits full of



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serious dignity and unspotted by the world of *barocco* with which Tabachetti was surrounded. At the present moment they have been partly scraped and show as terra-cotta; no doubt they have suffered not a little in the scraping and will do so still further when they are repainted, but there is no help for it. Great works of art have got to die like everything else.

And, after all, it is as well they should, lest they come to weigh us down too heavily. Why should a man live too long after he is dead? For a while, yes, if he has done good service in his generation, give him a new lease of life in the hearts and memories of his successors, but do not let even the most eminent be too exacting; do not let them linger on as nonagenarians when their strength is now become but labour and sorrow. We have statutes of mortmain to restrain the dead hand from entering in among the living—why not a statute of limitations or “a fixed period” as against reputations and works of art—say a thousand years or so—behind which time we will resolutely refuse to go, except in rare cases by acclamation of the civilized world? How is it to end if we go on at our present rate, with huge geological formations of art and book middens accreting in every city of Europe? Who is to see them, who even to catalogue them? Remember the Malthusian doctrine, and that the mind breeds in even more rapid geometrical ratio than the body. With such a surfeit of art and science the mind palls and longs to be relieved from both. As the true life which a man lives is not in that consciousness in the midst of which the thing he calls “himself” sits and the din and roar of which confuse and deafen him, but in the life he lives in others, so the true life a man's work should live after his death is not in the mouths, but in the lives of those that follow him; in these it may live while the world lasts, as his

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lives who invented the wheel or arch, but let it live in the use which passeth all praise or thanks or even understanding, and let the story die after a certain time as all things else must do.

Perhaps; but at any rate let us give them decent burial. Crush the wounded beetle if you will, but do not try to mend it.

I am glad to have seen the remains of the Assumption chapel while they are in their present state, but am not sure whether I would not rather see them destroyed at once, than meet the fate of restoration that is in store for them. At the same time I am confident that no more competent restorer than the able and eminent sculptor who has the work in hand is at all likely to be found. My complaint is not against him, but against the utter hopelessness of the task. I would again urge those who may be induced to take an interest in Tabachetti's work to lose no time in going to see what still remains of it at Crea.

Last January I paid a second visit to Crea; and finding a scaffolding up, was able to get on a level with the circle of full-length figures. They were still unpainted, the terra-cotta figures showing as terra-cotta and the plaster of Paris white. When they are all repainted the visitor will find it less easy to say which are new figures and which old. I will therefore say that of the lower circle of twenty full-length figures the only two entirely new figures are the sixth to the left of the door on entering, which represents a man holding an open book by his left hand and resting it on his thigh, and the sixth figure to the right of the door on entering. There are several unimportant restorations of details of dress, feet, and clouds; the rest of the work in this circle is all by Tabachetti.

In the circle of busts and half-length figures, the first

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new work to the left of the door on entering is a figure that holds a lamb, the two half-length figures that come next in sequence are also new—the second of these is a nun holding a little temple. The second upper choir of angels and saints is still in its original (?) colour and seems to have been little touched, as also the pendant.

The chapel containing the Marriage Feast at Cana has been much restored and badly repainted. Most of the figures are very poor, but some, and especially a waiter with his hair parted down the middle, who is offering a hare (not cut up) to a guest who seems to have had too much already, are very good indeed. I find it difficult to think that this waiter can be by any one but Tabachetti. The guitar-player is good, or rather was good before he was repainted—so is a lady near him, so are some of the waiters at the other end, and so are the bride and bridegroom; at any rate they are life-like and effective as seen from outside, but the chapel has suffered much from restoration.

There is one other chapel at Crea which may be by Tabachetti though I do not know that it is ascribed to him, I mean the one containing figures of the founder and his wife, a little below the main piazza. The shepherds and sheep to the left are probably not by Tabachetti, but the lady is a well-modelled figure. Both she, however, and her husband have been so cruelly clogged with new paint that it is hard to form an opinion about them.

On the piazza itself is a chapel representing the Birth of the Virgin which is also pleasing. It is not always easy for us English to tell the Birth of the Virgin from the Nativity, and it may help the reader to distinguish these subjects readily if he will bear in mind, that at the Birth of the Virgin the baby is always going to be washed—which never happens at the Nativity; this, and

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that the Virgin's mother is almost invariably to have an egg, and generally a good deal more, whereas the Virgin never has anything to eat or drink. The Virgin's mother always wants keeping up. Gaudenzio Ferrari has a Birth of the Virgin in the Church of S. Cristoforo at Vercelli. The Virgin's mother is eating one egg with a spoon, and there is another coming in on a tray, which I think is to be beaten up in wine. Something more substantial to follow is coming in on a hot plate with a cover over it and a napkin. The baby is to be washed, of course, and the kind old head nurse is putting her hand in the bath, while the under nurse pours in the hot water, to make sure that the temperature is exactly right. It is to be just nicely loo-warm. The bath itself is certainly a very little one; it will hold about a pint and a half, but mediaeval washing apparatus did run rather small, and Gaudenzio was not going to waste more of his precious space than he could help upon so uninteresting an object as a bath; in actual life the bath was doubtless larger. The under-under nurse is warming a towel, which will be nicely ready when the bath is over. Joachim appears to have been in very easy circumstances, and the arrangements could hardly be more commodious even though the event had taken place at a certain well-known establishment in the Marylebone Road.

At Milan, in a work that I only know by Pianazzi's engraving, there are two eggs coming in on a tray, and they too, I should say, are to be beaten up in wine. The under nurse is again filling a very little bath with warm water, and the head nurse is trying the temperature with her hand. There is no room for the warming of the towel, but there is no question that the towel is being warmed just out of the picture on the left hand. Here, at Crea, the attendant is giving the Virgin's

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mother a plain boiled egg, and has a spoon in her hand with which she is going to crack it. The Virgin's mother is frowning and motioning it away; she is quite as well as can be expected; still she does not feel equal to taking solid food, and the nurse is saying, "Do try, ma'am, just one little spoonful, the doctor said you was to have it, ma'am." In the smaller picture by Carpaccio (which, by the way, is hardly likely to be by him) at Bergamo she is again to have an egg; in the larger she is to have some broth now, but a servant can be seen in the kitchen plucking a fowl for dear life, so probably the larger picture refers to a day or two later than the earlier.<sup>1</sup>

The only other thing that struck us at Crea was the Virgin in the Presentation chapel. She is so much too small that one feels as though there must be some explanation that is not obvious. She is not more than 2 ft. 6 in. high, while the High Priest, and Joachim and St. Anne are all life-sized. The Chief Priest is holding up his hands, and seems a good deal surprised, as though he were saying—"Well, my dear, I must say you are the very smallest Virgin that I ever had presented to me during the whole course of my incumbency." Joachim and St. Anne seem very much distressed, and Joachim appears to be saying, "It is not our fault; I assure you, sir, we have done everything in our power. She has had plenty of nourishment." There must be some explanation of the diminutive size of the figure that is not apparent.

<sup>1</sup> The Virgin's mother does not, I believe, get eggs east of Milan. I am told that the custom of giving eggs either raw, or beaten up with wine, to women immediately after their confinement is a Valsesian one, and still obtains among the lower classes. East of Milan, and indeed in Germany and everywhere else, the Virgin's mother wants just as much keeping up, but she takes broth or something else, not eggs.

RETURNING TO VARALLO, IN THE town itself the most important work is the fresco by Gaudenzio Ferrari in the church of S. Maria delle Grazie, already several times referred to. The reader will find it fully described in the pages of Colombo; moreover, in January last Signor Pizzetta took excellent negatives of all the compartments into which the work is divided, and I learn that he has sent impressions—put together so as to give a very good idea of the work—to the Italian Exhibition that will open as these pages leave my hands. I have myself also sent to the same Exhibition a few unreduced impressions from the negatives used in the illustrations that face earlier pages: these will give the reader a more correct impression of the works from which they are taken than he can get from the reduction. I do not yet know whether they will be hung.

The fresco of S. Petronilla painted by Gaudenzio by moonlight on a chapel just outside the town, is now little more than a wreck.

There are a few works by Gaudenzio of no great importance in the Pinacoteca of the Museum; a few frescoes by Lanini, one or two drawings by Tanzio D'Enrico, which show that he was a well-trained draughtsman; two pictures by him, *barocco* in character, but not without power, and other works of more or less interest, are also in the Pinacoteca.

In the parish church of S. Gaudenzio, behind the altar, there is an exceedingly fine *ancona* by Gaudenzio, to which I have already referred. Over an altar in the north transept, but for the most part hidden behind a painted *tela*, is Tabachetti's very beautiful Madonna del Rosario, which the visitor should ask the Sacristan to show him; and last, but hardly least, there is a Madonna by Dedomenici of Rossa—a village higher up the Val-

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sesia—painted on linen, in the chapel dedicated to St. Joseph.

I referred to this last-named work in my book, *Alps and Sanctuaries*, and have seen no reason to modify the opinion I then expressed. I may repeat that about twenty years ago I was much struck with the painting and could not make out its strong and evidently unaffected mediaeval feeling, yet modernness at the same time. On consulting the Sacristan I learned that Dedomenici had died about 1840. He added that the extraordinary thing was that Dedomenici had never studied painting, and had never travelled out of the Valsesia; that he had, in fact, acquired his art by doing rather than by learning how to do.

This, as it appeared to me, explained his excellence. As a general rule the more people study how to do things the more hopelessly academic they become. Learning how to say ends soon in having nothing to say. Learning how to paint, in having nothing that one so longs to paint as to be unable to keep one's hands off it. It gratifies the lust of doing sufficiently to appease it, and then kills it. Learning how to write music, ends in the dreary symphonies, operas, cantatas, and oratorios which it seems are all that modern composers can give us. The only way to study an art is to begin at once with doing something that one wants very badly to do, and doing it—even though it be only very badly. Study, of course, but synchronously—letting the work be its own exercises.

If a man defers doing till he knows how to do, when is the hunting the *ignis fatuus* of a perfect manner to end, and the actual work that he is to leave behind him to begin? I know nothing so deadening, as a long course of preliminary study in any art, and nothing so living as work plunged into at once by one who is studying

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hard—over it, rather than in preparation for it. Jones talking with me once on this subject, and about *agape* as against *gnosis* in art, said, “Oh that men should put an enemy into their brains to steal away their hearts.” At any rate he and I have written *Narcissus* on these principles, and are not without hope that what it has lost in erudition it may have gained in freshness. I have, however, dealt with the question of how to study painting more at length in the chapter on the Decline of Italian art in *Alps and Sanctuaries*.

I said I would return to the chapel of Loreto a little way out of Varallo on the road to Novara. This work has a lunette which is generally, and I suppose correctly, ascribed to Gaudenzio. It is covered with frescoes not of extraordinary merit, but still interesting, and the chapel itself is extremely beautiful. I had intended dwelling upon it at greater length, but find that my space will not allow me to do so, though I shall hope to describe it more fully in another work on Italy, for which I have many notes that I have been unable to use here.

And now to conclude. A friend once said to me on the Sacro Monte, “How is it that they have no chapel of the Descent of the Holy Spirit?” I answered that the work of Gaudenzio Ferrari, Tabachetti, and Paracca was a more potent witness to, and fitter temple for, the Holy Spirit than any that the hands even of these men could have made for it expressly. For that there is a Holy Spirit, and that it does descend on those that diligently seek it, who can for a moment question? A man may speak lightly of the Father and it shall be forgiven him; he may speak lightly of the Son and it shall be forgiven him; but woe to him if he speak lightly of that Divine Spirit, inspiration of which alone



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it is that makes a work of art either true or permanently desirable.

Of the letter in which the *Sacro Monte* is written, I have at times in the preceding pages spoken lightly enough. Who in these days but the advocates whose paid profession it is to maintain the existing order, and those whom custom and vested interests hold enthralled, accepts the letter of Christianity more than he accepts the letter of Oriental exaggerated phraseology? If three days and three nights means in reality only thirty-six hours, so should full fifty per cent. be deducted wherever else seems necessary, and "dead" be read as "very nearly dead," and "the Son of God" as "rarely perfect man." Who, on the other hand, that need be reckoned with, denies the eternal underlying verity that there is an omnipresent unknown something for which Mind, Spirit, or God is, as Professor Mivart has well said, "the least misleading" expression? Who doubts that this Mind or God is immanent throughout the whole universe, sustaining it, guiding it, living in it, he in it and it in him? I heard of one not long since who said he had been an atheist this ten years—and added, "thank God." Who, again, doubts that the spirit of self-sacrifice for a noble end is lovelier and brings more peace at the last than one of self-seeking and self-indulgence? And who doubts that of the two great enemies both to religion and science referred to in the passage I have taken for my motto, "the too much" is even more dangerous than "the too little"?

I, and those who think as I do, would see the letter whether of science or of Christianity made less of, and the spirit more. Slowly, but very slowly—far, as it seems to our impatience, too slowly—things move in this direction. See how even the Church of Rome, and indeed all churches, are dropping miracles that they

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once held proper objects of faith and adoration. The Sacro Monte is now singularly free from all that we Protestants are apt to call superstition. The miracles and graces so freely dealt in by Fassola and Torrotti find no place in the more recent handbooks. The Ex Votos and images in wax and silver with which each chapel formerly abounded have long disappeared, and the sacred drama is told with almost as close an adherence to the facts recorded in the Gospels, as though the whole had been done by Protestant workmen. Where is the impress of Christ's footprint now? carted away or thrown into a lumber room as a child's toy that has been outgrown—so surely as has been often said do the famous words "E pur si muove" apply to the Church herself, as well as to that world whose movement she so strenuously denied.

The same thing is happening here among ourselves. As the good churchmen at Varallo have thrown away their Flemish dancer, their footprint of the Saviour, and their Virgins that box thieves' ears and persist in turning round and smiling even after they have been asked not to do so, so we, by the mouths of our Bishops, are flinging away our Genesis, our Exodus, and I know not how much more. In the *Nineteenth Century* for last December the Bishop of Carlisle says that the account of Creation given in the Book of Genesis "does not pretend to be historical in any ordinary sense"—or, in other words, that it does not pretend to be historical, or true, at all. Surely this is rather a startling jettison. The Bishop goes on to say that "the account of the Flood is a very precious tradition full of valuable teaching," and is, he doubts not, a record of some great event that actually occurred; "but," he continues, "I confess that until Bishop Colenso brought his arithmetic to bear upon it and some other portions of Old

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Testament history, I was quite [why “quite”?] under the impression that the common sense of Christians abstained from criticizing this ancient record by the canons applicable to ordinary history.” This was not my own impression, but the Bishop’s is doubtless more accurate. If things, however, go on at this rate, a hundred years hence we shall have a Bishop writing to the *Twentieth Century* that till X, Y, or Z brought their canons of historical criticism to bear on the Resurrection itself, he was “quite” under the impression that the common sense of Christians abstained from criticizing this ancient record by the canons applicable to ordinary history. The Bishop appeals, and rightly, to common sense. This is of all courts the safest and rightest to abide by, but it must not be forgotten that the common sense of one generation is not that of the next, and that the modification with which common sense descends cannot be effected, however gently we may try to do so, without some disturbance of the pre-existing common sense, and some reversal of its decrees.

That the letter of the coming faith will be greatly truer than that of the many that have preceded it I for one do not believe. Let us have no more “Lo heres” and “Lo theres” in this respect. I would as soon have a winking Madonna or a forged decretal, as the doubtful experiments or garbled articles which the high priests of modern science are applauded with one voice for trying to palm off upon their devotees; and I should look as hopefully for good result from a new monastery as from a new school of art, college of music, or scientific institution. Whatever faith or science the world at large bows down to will in its letter be tainted with the world that worships it. Whoever clings to the spirit that underlies all the science obtaining among civilized peoples will assuredly find that he cannot serve

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God and Mammon. The true Christ ever brings a sword on earth as well as peace, and if he maketh men to be of one mind in an house, he divideth a house no less surely. The way will be straight in the future as in the past. All that can be hoped for is that it may perhaps become a trifle more easy through the work of the just men made perfect through suffering that have gone before, and that he who in bygone ages would have been burnt will now be only scouted.

I have in the last few foregoing pages been trenching on somewhat dangerous ground, but who can leave such a work as the Sacro Monte without being led to trench on this ground, and who that trenches upon it can fail to better understand the lesson of the Sacro Monte itself? I am aware, however, that I have said enough if not too much, and will return to the note struck at the beginning of my work—namely, that I have endeavoured to stimulate study of the great works on the Sacro Monte rather than to write the full account of them which their importance merits. At the same time I must admit that I have had great advantages. Not one single previous writer had ever seen an earlier work than that of Fassola, published in 1670 [1], whereas I have had before me one that appeared in 1586 [7]. I had written the greater part of my book before I had found Caccia, and on going out to Varallo at the end of December 1887 to verify and reconsider it on the spot, found myself forced over and over again to alter what I had written, in consequence of the new light given me by the 1586 [7] and 1590 [1] editions of Caccia. It is with profound regret that though I have continued to search for the 1565 and 1576 editions up to the very last moment before these sheets leave my hands, my search has been fruitless.

Over and above the advantage of having had even

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the later Caccia before me, I have seen Cav. Aless. Godio's *Cronaca di Crea*, which no previous writer had done, inasmuch as this work has been only very lately published. Moreover, when I was at Varallo, it being known that I was writing on the Sacro Monte, every one helped me, and so many gave me such important and interesting information that I found my labour a very light and pleasant one. Especially must I acknowledge my profound obligations to Signor Dionigi Negri, town clerk of Varallo, to Signor Galloni, the present director of the Sacro Monte, to the late Cav. Prof. Antonini and his son, Signori Arienta and Tonetti, and to many other kind friends whom, if I were to begin to name, I must name half the town of Varallo. With such advantages I am well aware that the work should be greatly better than it is; if, however, it shall prove that I have succeeded in calling the attention of abler writers to Varallo, and if these find the present work of any, however small, assistance to them, I shall hold that I have been justified in publishing it. In the full hope that this may turn out to be the case, I now leave the book to the generous consideration and forbearance of the reader.



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